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REV. J. GEORGE GIBSON.

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DIVINE SONG IN ITS HUMAN ECHO!

OR,

SONG AND SERVICE!







Very Faishfully yours. I Glorge Gibson

Divine Song in its Human Echo!

OR

SONG AND SERVICE!

A Series of Sbort Plain Sermons on Old-Hashioned Hymns.

BY THE

REV. J. GEORGE GIBSON,

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, DURHAM,

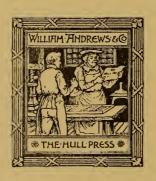
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AUTHOR OF

Stepping Stones to Life," "Plain Words to Men," "The Primary School Series," etc.

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To my dear Mother

THESE SERMONS ARE LOVINGLY DEDICATED!



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DIVINE SONG IN ITS HUMAN ECHO!

SONG AND SERVICE!

SERMON I.

"The Day of the Lord!"

St. Matthew, VI., 10.

"Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven."

THESE words are the prayer which our Teacher would express in the religion of our life, the means by which our Redeemer would fill the Church with His own Desire,—His own Spirit,—His own Work. They are not a mere form by means of which we are to recognise our subordination, but the Banner of the Cross,—of the Cross Militant and Triumphant.

The first disciples were in these to learn the very nature of His Empire, and the purpose of

His mighty travail. Truly, while their bondage and social subjection to the iron-handed invaders of their country made all true patriots feel sad and weary, history was preparing at a very rapid rate. Dynasties were ceasing, government was degraded, society was breaking up, all bonds of law and custom were being broken; and the end of everything seemed near; chaos and social, as well as religious anarchy, breathed despair, and moral leprosy invaded the very courts of purity. The Guileless Israelite sought solitude to mourn before Jehovah, and the unthinking flotsam of the schools lay as drift on the borders of any mad zealotry which promised any "Day of the Lord." Judas and Theudas, and many others were even encouraged by those of influence among the Nationalist Jews, while the mailed Roman stalked suspicious through streets where Solomon had ridden with Prince-Envoys from distant climes, and David had passed to "Sing unto the Lord a New Song." Men were longing for an "Everlasting Kingdom," and for a "Dominion that hath no

end." All Jerusalem and the citizens and hillmen of Judah and Ephraim had exulted in the "Message" of John the Baptist, and even gentle women were deeply interested in any "Word of the Lord" which foretold the breaking-down of oppression.

For Oh! the burden was heavy,—they were heavily laden. Their fathers had sinned; and the wages of sin is always Bitterness and Death. Their whole soul cried out against the prevalent wickedness and its ever concomitant pain and loss.

We know, alas! what this all means, by our own painful experience. We feel the environment of Sin, as a "darkness that can be felt." Evil is so all permeating. The fountains of our pleasure are poisoned by it, and our Day of Brightness is shadowed over by the looming Mountain of Offence. In our every social circle the Tempter is present; and in commercial state, and all other undertakings it seems so hard not to be borne down of evil. How we say to God—

"Thy Kingdom come O God, Thy rule O Christ begin, Break with Thine iron rod, The tyrannies of sin."

Ah! that is it! the tyrannies of sin! Sin has no law, but a deadly rule, a baneful presence chamber, where obedience means death, and a half-hearted subjection means chaotic anarchy. Here the cup of friendship holds poisoned nectar; and all the weapons of war are jagged and pain increasingly. The tyrannies of sin are just what we cannot endure; and for that reason are God's messengers, telling us in harsh tones how great is our need of His salvation. In sin is no harmony, its very existence infers discord and unrest. There is no peace for the wicked. There is no balm for the sinner. His tasks accomplished are void of joy to the victor, in the strife against nature and God. "All is vanity and vexation of spirit."

And, for all this through centuries sin has prevailed in the lives of the large majority.

Authority has been misused, privilege abused, liberty misguided to license, adventurers have prospered, virtue has been persecuted, and the clean garment of the chaste life has been befouled by vile reproaches.

"Where is Thy reign of peace
And purity and love?
When shall all hatred cease
As in the realms above?
When comes the promised time
That war shall be no more,
And lust, oppression, crime
Shall flee Thy face before?"

Look abroad, and what do we see? The Kings coming from afar, bringing their trophies to the altar of Zion's God? Are the lions being taught to eat straw like the ox? Is the venom of the asp less deadly? Alas! my brother, alas! Are not more and more of the healthy and bread-earning fathers, and brothers, and sons being prepared for the Moloch of War every year? Are not heavy taxes being wrung from the feeble and poor who are left to struggle or to starve? Is not class being set

more bitterly against class than ever? Has Pilate never spoken lately of spoiling the Temple Treasury that his power may be increased? Is any thing Holy,—sacred from a rampant, reckless secularism?

But still we wait and wail and pray. We know that man cannot govern man. None but the Judge of all the Earth can be trusted to do right! To God we turn—

"We pray Thee Lord arise
And come in Thy great Might,
Revive our longing eyes,
Which languish for thy sight.
Men scorn Thy Sacred Name,
And wolves devour thy fold;
By many deeds of shame
We learn that love grows cold."

The Kingdom of God! herein lies the secret refuge of our hope.

This is what Christ told the disciples through their prayer. The best human systems cannot succeed, without they are channels of the power of God. It is not well that many little knights should air their caprices in the King's Land. Even Satraps God will not tolerate. The day of the Spirit of God is come when God shall rule directly, and guide in His own Person the affairs of His Heavenly Kingdom. As God is all pervasive to the eye of the saints above, and all-present to the consciousness of the angels, so He shall be to us here.

And this implies a constant medium in our own soul. A king only rules effectively through willing subjects. While our loyalty is only nominal, the prestige of the king may be great, but his personal influence at the same time could be very small. God's Kingdom will come when we are co-workers together with Him in every good work. His truth is mightiest when it is making us free. We must therefore humble ourselves to Him.

We may have many desires to abandon, many to learn; but never mind: it must be done. When the soldiers and tax-gatherers came to St. John Baptist, we can easily imagine that his commands were not very pleasing to the ear. When the Pharisees came, there

was harder hearing required, if they would be justified. They refused in most cases to obey him, as they afterwards refused to follow Christ. So, many decline to throw in their lot with Christ in His Church even now. Duty is never palatable to the self-indulgent. Service is never acceptable as a duty of the would-be recipient. They will never help on a Divine Kingdom who always claim the right to "pull the wires" in everything. And yet Christ claims just this willing subjection of us. We, ourselves, are to become humble servants, sons, lovers of God and of His ways. His government is to enter into our business, our home life, our studies, our doctrine, our worship, and indeed everything belonging to us. Brethren, let us pray for God's coming in His Kingdom, let us ask that His will may be done on earth; but never let it escape our minds that by us, and in us, this Kingdom is first to work a revolution.

But as light is never absorbed and lost in a good reflector, so power and life cannot remain inactive in the presence of inert or opposing circumstances. Do men light a candle and put it under a bushel? Is a city hid which, fortified and menacing, stands upon a hill? Christians who represent the great King cannot furl their banners and indulge private sentiment in obscurity, while all about them are cries of disloyalty, chronic rebellion, and despite of Paternal Government. Our Divine Head has warned us that if we really live, our influence will lead to friction, to persecution, to privation, to reproach and cross-bearing. And it is not for us to consider the whispers of expediency, but to obey as leal-hearted children subject to the Lord of Life—by living, by testifying, by agressive light-bearing. Religion is not a matter of mere sentiment, but a well of lifegiving and energizing emotions coined into lively deeds—the currency of the heavenly Kingdom. And the area of our influence must not be the circle illumined by our church gas lights, by our parish boundaries, or even by the confines of our national or imperial territory.

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All is His land, all are His people, Christ died for all; and he would live in all. His authority must be more than acknowledged: it must be asserted. More! It must be proved that it is backed by power. The heathen of every clime, the alien from the communion of the Church, the self-banished from the Catholic Fold of the Universal Father and King, the erring and the anti-Christian, are all to be compelled to own the sway of the Great Teacher, of the Great King. Whether the rebels used the Name of the King against His rule, or whether they blaspheme against it daily, they are disloyal; and it behoves us to put away false charity, and weak, vain sentiments born of the carnal love of ease, and, while loving the soul involved in darkness, to testify to the rights of the Sovereign to implicit obedience. The weak missionary never wins anything but a weak adhesion of weak inclination. Faith in the Gospel he preaches, confidence in the life he calls for, belief in the supreme and beneficent authority of the God he tells of—these are the

seeds from which spring strong Christian associations. Need we tell how even untutored savages, brutal denizens of slumdom, and worldly-minded citizens of high rank have been drawn to the consecrated banner by such a faithful ministry. Alas, how many die *unsought* by Christian Heralds, die unknown by trembling hesitators, who might—nay *ought* long since to have been numbered among the Sons of the Church of God—

"O'er heathen lands afar Thick darkness broodeth yet."

What can we do? for so small is the Church Army of Pioneers. What only can we do when our unaided hands are worn and weary, when our hearts faint and grow sad? Brethren, let us work and pray! The hills are full of succours—the legion of Angels is near,—the strongholds of sin are sapped and undermined by the Eternal Truth of God. "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, even lift them up ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in." In glad refrain, our hearts reply—We "see

afar," and perhaps nearer than we hoped, the darkness less dense, and a blue vault studded with his heralds, lesser and greater. And then in faith, as the prophets and servants of old we cry—

"Arise, O morning Star, And never, never set!"

SERMON II.

"The Iking's Iberalds!"

(Christmas Day.)

ST. LUKE, II., 20.

"And the Angel said unto them, 'Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.'"

THE birth of a King is an event of vital importance in any kingdom. So much depends upon his ability, his disposition and his rule. Nations often depend almost entirely upon the character of the king introduced. A weak king means a weak or turbulent council, a lethargic or rebellious people. A wise king carries on the business of state with the maximum of effect, and the minimum of waste by friction or neglect.

And where the nation is not quite independent of foreign influences or foreign domination, nothing short of wisdom upon the throne can save a nationality from utter ruin.

Judæa was in this condition. She existed as a distinct state on sufferance. The slightest indiscretion would bring on a crisis, would from a protectorate develop a sovereignty, absolute and tyrannical. The reigning king was cunning and cruel-relentless and unscrupulous. He had subdued the strong banditti, and obtained a complete mastery over the fearful Jews. But he was only feared—not trusted. The people had no confidence in his rule. He was suspected of treachery, and was a deeply stained murderer. No Jewish independence could spring up and flourish under the blight of his suspicious self-seeking; and no pure worship could be maintained, in presence of crime in the King's palace. Though he had come from Edom, though his garments were dyed with blood, though he was mighty as prince and counsellor, none could accept him as the promised deliverer; none thought of him as of a patriot saviour.

And as shepherds watched their flocks, longing sadly for Him who should be the Lion

of Judah, the Morning Star of Freedom, telling each other of the last shame of Israel's King, the most recent violation of justice in her borders, and often wondering when God would in very deed visit his people, a wonderful thing happened. The sheep lay huddled together in peaceful slumber, the dogs were silent about the encampment, the sky had become blacker with the encompassing night, when the heavens glimmered and glittered with sudden splendour, the glory of the God of Sabaoth shone around, the armies of the Lord of Hosts—the angels of His that do His pleasure—filled the lambent air, and an angel spake those blessed words which to-day are heard in hundreds of thousands of ears—bringing joy and confidence to the hearts erstwhile sad and lone.

The poor shepherds were amazed, fearing they scarce knew what, from the apparition of the beings of the other world. The word had been indistinct until now. The veil of the Temple fitly typified the separation of the here and the hereafter. Only the privileged and

those about to die were ever rewarded for their faith by "open vision." And yet—

"Hark the Herald angels sing Christ is born in Bethlehem, Peace on Earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled."

The middle boundary is taken away. longer is the son to be kept away from His Father in heaven. God stoops to the lowliest, keeps from His embrace no poor wanderer. In Judæa's trial and strife and fear, He brings peace and joy and restoration. The 'Anointed' is born—is become as a man. "God commendeth His love to us in that while we were yet in our sins He loved us." This was the first message of the angel-heralds. And yet not all of it. God has done his part. In fulness of time He has revealed His will, and manifested forth His grace. The Anointed of God is given—a Son of God. The veil of mortality has been penetrated by the everlasting and inextinguishable love of the Father-King. He has opened His arms to receive and welcome

lost, wandering man. The Divine Nature vindicates itself in the longing, yearning invitation to the prodigal needy—the ingrate restored to a sense of his unworthiness. Now the Herald demands our confidence. "Fear not," fear not.

"Joyful all ye nations rise, Join the triumph of the skies, With the angelic host proclaim Christ is born in Bethlehem."

Here was the way out of all difficulties for Judæa—here the solution of all her problems—the panacea for her sicknesses. "Hadst thou but known, even thou, the day of thy visitation." It was not the Roman who was sapping the strength of Jewry, nor the Herod who was the real tyrant. Her sins, her jealousies, her endless bickerings and vain janglings, her pride, her bigotry where the letter of the law was concerned, her neglect of the weightier matters of judgment and mercy. Alas! Jerusalem! These were thy foes, these thine enemy within the city. Never did Jews contend more for the

purity of the outside of the cup and platter; never did she neglect the duty of her high calling more lamentably! How often in maintaining necessary discipline, keeping fast and festival, restoring the glory of decayed foundations, reviving observance and ordinance long discontinued by the indolence or error of man, do we forget the work of mercy, the expression of practical sympathy, the stirring-up of the best part in the masses of non-confessors which surround us.

True, in the celebration of Christmastide, we are not so Pagan as, ages ago, many were wont to be. We recognise that the season is one for the cheering of the sad, and the poor, and the friendless. But, do we call them from outside urgently enough to warrant us in joining in the Angels' Song? Do we magnify the cause of our generous impulses, of our human kindness? Do we reveal, with sufficient distinctness, the source of our ecstacy? Does the "Divine afflatus" bear us on, and up, and outwards as we—

"With the angelic host proclaim, Christ is born in Bethlehem?"

How can we be silent while the cherubim and seraphim, bright with the joy of heaven, exultingly sing—ringing a merry peal of a loyalty and triumph that only the pure can know.

"Hark, the herald angels sing Glory to the new-born King."

Then the Herald told the Shepherds other tidings of great joy. The Son of God was the Son of Man! The work required by God of the being He created when Man was made, was to be proved a "possible achievement." The Prince would show men how they might conquer the ills flesh is heir to. He became incarnate. He who thought it not robbery to be equal with God, yet made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Himself the form of mankind.

"Christ, by highest Heaven adored, Christ the Everlasting Word, Late in time behold Him come, Offspring of a Virgin's womb,"

"Tempted in all points even as we are, yet without sin." Liable to our troubles, aye, to more than most of us even fancy falls to our lot. Born in obscurity, of a poor parent, and under conditions most unfavourable to a prosperous ministry and Kingship; how was it possible for Him to "save His people?" We can imagine the struggle of His youth, the hard discipline of His lonely youth—subject to the will of those at the head of His household, and yet "Knowing that He must be about His Father's business." Chastened by sorrows, ever burning but ever unconsumed, continually walking on holy ground while doing the drudgery of this ordinary poor man's life. Yet-

> "Veiled in flesh, the Godhead see, Hail the Incarnate Deity, Pleased as Man with man to dwell, Jesus our Emmanuel."

When the valleys are clouded in gloom, and the dark pines put on their sombre night-dress, and all colour seems gone from the bright landscape, the rosy after-glow cast upon the snowy mountain tops fills our hearts with a soulpiercing glory the bright daylight would have made impossible. God was not hidden in the Son of Man-only veiled, and as at the foot of some glacier the sun shining upon a grey refusestrewn mass of dirty ice, pierces through it with a clear blue softness, so in Jesus of Nazareth. poor and rejected of men, of no form nor comeliness and of no beauty, is a Divine glory which increases the deeper the gloom of His circumstance, and reaches the heart with conviction most when He seems most forsaken. A Babe in a manger, crowded in the stable of an Eastern caravanserai, a long way from home, here is our Emmanuel,—our lesus.

In the blood of the martyrs the sins of ignorance and vice were cleansed, and the flame of disgrace which licked the Confessor's naked limbs burned away the barriers of prejudice, and melted the ice of hate which prevented the admission of the heathen into the One Church Militant of the Christ.

"Hark the herld angels sing, Glory to the new-born King."

And last, the Messenger indicates the character of the Kingdom of God on earth. The tidings are of great joy "to all people."

"Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace;
Hail, the Son of Righteousness;
Light and life to all He brings,
Risen with healing in His wings."

A Kingdom independent of accidents, of birth, of condition, of earth's trials, and joys! A rule which shall be for the advantage of the people. No self-interested despotism, no provision for His own luxuries, no indulgence of His own passions, save of a passion of continued sacrifice! Ever evolving the sweet perfume of His healing ointment, always giving, eternally a servant, and a king because serving. The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give His life a took ransom for many. The old kings of Israel took of the choicest of their subjects for their own use and enjoyment. The Eternal King gave

gifts to men and spared not His blood, even the "Blood of the new Covenant, which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel."

"Mild He laid His glory by,
Born that Man no more may die,
Born to raise the Sons of earth,
Born to give them second birth."

As He said, herein is my Father, glorified that ye bring forth much fruit, so He did, for He humbled Himself, and become obedient to death, even the death of the cross. This was the Child King born at Bethlehem. Was He not worthy the angels' song? Did He not offer to all release from burdens? And does He not freely fulfil all His promises of Salvation. O that we were worthy to sound His praise abroad as Angels did then! That we could only understand all that the Christian Church He is the head of is capable of being to the needy, miserable world! If we want to win the masses of men for Christ, we must go to the Plains of Bethlehem's pastures and listen to that heavenly chorus. We must listen until the bonds of traditional thought and custom are melted in thin air, and we become free of the Kingdom that is an Everlasting Kingdom—subjects of Him of whose dominion there shall be no end.

As we separate to keep this Festival with our dear ones at home, let us think of that Heavenly Vision. As we unite, as we delight to do, in the grand old Christmas Hymns, let us look up to the opening heavens and we shall hear where the Church will find her Sovereign. And, as the Beatific Vision fades from our sight, we catch the words "Goodwill toward men," an echo from another voice is heard in answer—"Other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring that there may be one fold and one Shepherd." Brethren, in Christian seeking we shall be most "present with the Lord."

[&]quot;Hark, the herald angels sing Glory to our new-born King."

SERMON III.

"The Eternal Thelper!"

(New Year.)

PSALMS, CXXI., 2.

'My help cometh from the Lord which made heaven and earth."

THERE may have been moments of madness during which men have, in their despair, felt utterly alone, and dependent upon their own imperfect ability for all they sought after or needed; but only the unthinking and reckless can ever have had anything like confidence in their own sufficiency, their own adequate equipment for the ever changing battle-field of life. Even the so-called Godless are daily turning for help in emergency to finite creatures like themselves, and recognize that perfect independency is an utter impossibility.

The student realizes constantly the presence of a force more or less hidden—which man is

quite incapable of generating, and which often indeed is discovered acting in a direction quite opposite to the general tendency of man's ordinary life. It is a power which moulds and ultimately guides all events, as they are marshalled in endless and motley procession, by the will of an inscrutable but all-wise Providence. Some call it the Time Spirit; but it often operates against the trend of popular opinion. It is the voice of God. He who took Ephraim by the shoulders, teaching Him how to walk, and hardened Pharaoh's heart that. Israel's emancipation might be more assured and complete, who always manifests His glory where the shadow of the cross falls most darkly, He is our help from of old. Unconsciously, our Fathers have depended upon His assistance; and involuntarily they have leant upon His strong arm when weary and friendless.

"O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast
And our eternal home.

Beneath the shadow of Thy Throne, Thy saints have dwelt secure. Sufficient is Thine arm alone; And our defence is sure."

How deep has been my own conviction of the eternal presence of this help during the twelve months gone by! How strong and reliable has proved our Stay! How faithful has been our King in the time of His Kingdom's trial! How safe we have felt when the swelling of Jordan has found us in the Mount with Him. It was this certainty which bore the Early English missionaries through various and awful scenes of persecution and heathen rage, and encouraged them to lay the foundations of those noble piles which prove to modern ages how deep was their faith in the power behind them.

"They met the tyrant's brandished steel,
The lion's gory mane,
They bowed their heads, the death to feel,
Who follows in their train?
A noble army, men, and boys,
The matron and the maid,

Around the Saviour's Throne rejoice, In robes of light arrayed."

It was just this consciousness of Divine help which was the pilgrim's "Key of Promise," to the early confessors and priests of the church. Had their cause been a political one-of a merely humanly organised propaganda, or even the attempt of the best minds to influence the world for the best objects, they had never sealed their testimony at the pillory, and the stocks, and the prison-house and gibbet as they did. But they felt the Divine presence actuating them, they cried out like Jonah, as compelled to convey a Divine message; and their work remains for ever. The thumbscrew and the "boot," the pincers and the flame. alike were unable to move them from the foot of the Cross, and tyrant has often trembled as accused, while the wretched prisoner has reasoned of righteousness and temperance and judgment to come. The plague has filled pagan courts with loud and bitter cries; but Azrael has passed over the lintels sprinkled

with the blood of the saints. Wars and rumours of war have put nations into anxiety born of fearful tumult; but the saints have not been dismayed. They have seen, in the clouds, the sign of the Son of Man! They have fled to the Mountains of Divine Protection, and enduring to the end, they have been saved. They have looked upon the City of Zion, and have not trembled even before the glittering sheen of the spears of blasphemous and foolish Rabshekah.

"Beneath the shadow of Thy throne,
Thy saints have dwelt secure,
Sufficient is Thine Arm alone,
And our defence is sure."

The Church and the World both feel constrained to acknowledge the "antiquity" of God. History is full of Him! His strong deliverances and marvellous interferences for good have been patent to all observers,—even the most casual. The hardened Roman soldier, who had charge of the execution of Pilate's will on Calvary, was compelled to exclaim, "Truly

this is the Son of God." And whenever the Right has come out conqueror in any struggle against overwhelming odds, the amazed onlooker has been found ready to put upon record, in every age, the wonderful interposition of the Omnipotent. The unknown forces of all times have naturally been ascribed to the Ancient Deity unseen, yet very certainly indwelling. But an ancient God is not enough for immortal spirits. That which has a capacity for eternity demands more than a God of many days. The ideal deity must be Eternal too and Infinite. He must not be the idea evolved from the experienced need of man; but He must be God independently of man's need of Him-Creator of all things—not Creature for all things. God is not the product of our desire; He is the Father of us all,—but above all things Eternal.

Before volcanic action ever began to leave its traces upon the level surface of the earth before the hills rose majestic with their snowy or wood-clad heights—before the high ridges shed the rushing torrents of ice water down many caverned valleys—nay before the electric glow gave place to the glorious Orb of Day—"the heavens declared the glory of God; and the firmament shewed His handiwork. In them had He "set a Tabernacle for the sun."—

"Before the hills in order stood,
Or earth received her frame,
From everlasting, Thou art God,
To endless years the same."

And this God of ours was not like them of Olympus—a little above the standard of ordinary humanity. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so great is He in His mercies.

"A thousand ages in Thy sight
Are like an evening gone,
Short as the watch that ends the night
Before the rising sun."

And herein lies the great contrast between our God and ourselves! He from everlasting to endless days—we creatures of one day and offspring from another. He, God the *King*—we depending upon Him even for "breath and life and all things."

What changes men's families have had to take note of during the year that is gone. Many lives have been begun, continued, and ended, all within the short bounds of a twelvemonth. Our homes have become hopeful, sad, despairing, and strong, many times during one short year. Many clouds have flitted before our Sun of Joy, and have seemed to be never going to pass away; and this has only preceded a long season in which the pleasures and prosperities of this world have been such constant companions of ours that we have dared to think the daytime could be followed by no night for us. And all since last we met to usher in the New-born Year!

As in the days of Noah and Lot, we have eaten and drunk, and married and given in marriage. We have laid up for many years and have not known until God came to awaken us from our folly, that our very immortality depended upon *Him*.

"Time, like an ever rolling stream, Bears all its sons away; They fly, forgotten, as a dream Dies at the opening day."

And our help in emergency, and our support in the hungry land of pilgrimage have both come from the Lord who made heaven and earth. When our heart became hard under repeated disappointments and the ingratitude or thoughtless coldness of those we loved in deed and truth, it was the balm of Gilead which healed us of our disease. And when our heads were bowed with woe unspeakable, it was the pierced hand of Jesus which lifted up our face until our eyes met His, still burning with the Calvary Love for us; and our hearts were lightened, and we became free again. How kindly He led us apart into a solitary place when the snares of temptation were set for our souls, and counselled us! How the sight of His tears chastened our sorrows when we laid to rest in God's Acre the remains of our dear ones!

Yes, Man may fly forgotten of his fellows like a dream; his life may be very insignificant in the judgment of his peers; the resultant of all his works may not amount to much to other men's minds; but no poor Christian's life can become invisible to succeeding ages, because in the poorest witness the Saviour's Word ever abides, and cannot be rubbed out even for the sake of an otherwise worthless life. As He and His influence cannot die, so the best of our lives—that where he is—will live for ever.

Think of this, ye pessimists! and be ashamed of your base unfaith! Think of this, ye browbeaten ones! Your life—that part of it in which the Lord has wrought—will live for ever. A light, lit by Christ, never can go out, though earthly priests, who have forgotton its very existence, may leave it and die. "Our God abideth for ever," and "His word cannot return unto Him void."

And now we commence another year, and begin to tread a new path, which may mean to us a new set of experiences, a new kind of trial, and a new sweetness of joy.

But although all may be changing to us in the form of our life, one thing never changesJesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Whether we cross the treacherous sea, or journey through rocky valleys and wild mountain-passes,—our Pillar of Cloud or Fire is always near—"He will never leave us, nor forsake us."

Whatever our peculiar trials, His presence nerves us to endurance. However long we may wait for our sight of Blessed Canaan, we are content to wait while we see the fleecy Cloud of Safety before us, over the Tabernacle. It was there when the rumble of Pharaoh's chariots put us in great fear; It was there when the mighty waves poured over our proud adversary; and so long as God will be with us, we feel that no harm can come to us. We feel somehow as the sturdy sons of Israel must have felt when at last their weary probation was over, and they stood watching the ark of God, which the priests were bearing down to Jordan's stream. The past was theirs; and all the good was that in which they had communed with God. The future, with all its uncertainty, was

before them, but the *certainty* also that God was with them.

"O God our help in ages past,
Our hope in years to come,
Be Thou our guard while troubles last,
And our Eternal Home."

The Canaan we have such hopes centred in is before us. We can make it a "Land flowing with Milk and Honey "-or otherwise-according as we observe the Divine Presence, or disregard it. How are we going to live this year out? is a more important question for us than "How are we going to enjoy this year?" Are we going to live it relying upon the help of God? Do we naturally seek to do His Will? "The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul. The Testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The Statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the Commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes— . . by them is Thy servant warned; and in keeping of them there is great reward." Here is the secret of a Happy New

Year—of a year that shall ever be new—never old—always new with promise and joy and peace unutterable.

A life lived with God is the only life in which perfect success can safely be looked for; and a Godly life is never a failure!

- "Eternal Spirit, by whose Breath
 The soul is raised from sin and death:
 Before Thy throne we sinners bend
 To us Thy quickening power extend."
- "O God our help in ages past,
 Our hope for years to come,
 Be Thou our guard while troubles last,
 And our Eternal Home."

SERMON IV.

"The Presence Chamber!"

(Epiphany.)

PSALMS, XI., 4.

"The Lord is in His holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven: His eyes behold, His eyelids try, the children of men."

THE temple worship has a foremost place among the customs of nearly every race of men. Each nation of the past has had some place where it was believed the gods could be approached with greatest advantage, and impleaded with purest desire; and among the most highly civilized nations like the Jews, the Egyptians, and the Greeks, there have always been some special shrines, before which man might commune with his Creator and Spiritual Ruler. The classic heroes often erected costly temples in certain commemoration of what they

regarded as Divine interpositions for their own benefit, and in these places various gods were supposed to be most ready to bear help to their votaries. And the greater the spirituality of the nation seeking this communion, the greater the safeguards to acquire for their erections sanctity, and to preserve their worship from the intrusion of customs likely to be displeasing to the Deity. Hence David's ready acquiescence in the word which prohibited his own designs for a temple, and hence also the restrictions imposed upon the builders of the first temple at Jerusalem by Solomon himself. Hence, too, that peculiar reverence paid by Christians to the Houses of Prayer we build to the glory of our Lord.

Perhaps there may be a danger of idolatry to be guarded against here, but it were better that this danger should be daily avoided than that we should in any way abate one single observance of the reverent soul, or lower in one single respect our ideal of the House of God's Dwelling-place. This House has been to many of us verily a "gate of Heaven." Our burdens

have been here lifted by the nail-pierced hand of the Strong Zion of Judah, and the Book of the mysteries of our lives has been opened for us by One like unto the Lamb that was slain. The House cannot be like a human erection to us; it is ever for us a Bethel, and angels here, as nowhere else, seem to ascend and descend upon the Ladder of God's Infinite tender mercy. Whether we meet in cathedral fanes or in darkened catacomb chapels, there is something of association which ever inspires us with wonder and praise. The missionary in distant haunts of savages, amid the execrations of a lie-enraged populace, standing by the altar with One like unto the Son of Man, exultantly sings-

"All people that on earth do dwell
Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice,
Him serve with fear, His praise forth tell,
Come ye before Him and rejoice."

And why?

Because there is in the means of grace an ever constant reminder that here God meets

with and blesses His people. King Solomon's prayer was not only a plea for the All-Father's presence in His House, but was a grandly confident assertion of the certainty that in the Holy Place the Almighty would commune with the weakly finite, that there the supernatural and informate would translate itself in the evident and concrete humanity which He had created. Unlike so many of the wise men of our, and all fallible ages, he believed in the personal relation between God and His own elect human children,—that it was true that the Almighty Love burned for an object in the deliverance of Man, in short, that our God was not only a Deity to be impleaded, but a Loving Father-King who approached men wherever He could breathe into them His Spirit and inspire them with His power. Therefore it is that the Religious Soul has ever approached with a reverent delight the House of Prayer. It is the outward and visible sign of the Divine pity and love for a fallen and self-disinherited race, and a standing proof which cannot be gainsaid that "the Lord, He is gracious," and that in His Church He manifests Himself to His Disciples in all His glory. Here, and through the Worship of His Church, He has spoken with an authority of deed and truth which we do not recognize in separation from His people and the Divinely appointed ordinances through which He draws nigh unto us, in the power from on High by which we overcome evil tendency, and triumph over personal schism of all kinds.

The Magi from the Chaldean rivers saw His star in the East and came to worship in His presence. The early fathers of our race recognised His great power and love, and "began to call upon the name of the Lord." The Jews, scattered under every clime, and subject to despots throughout distant countries, turned their faces toward Jerusálem to offer their orisons, because there God visited His people.

Our Blessed Lord appears to have taken great pains to shew, as had the prophets in all

ages, that Jehovah was not a Deity who needed "rivers of oil," and burnt "offerings of fatlings," as though He was in want and must be approached in a bargain, but He was the "Keeper of Israel," "The Captain of our Salvation," He who taught Ephraim to walk, "taking him by the shoulders." Every saving of Christ seems to amount to this:-" Think not, like the heathen that ye need much speaking for God to hear you. Your Father knoweth ye have need . . . before ye ask Him. With His Son will He not freely give you all things?" And, my brethren, we ought more to remember that God is the first to approach man. He sent His servants the prophets, and lastly His own Son." He it is who comes through Pagan systems and through man's wilful, blind materialism, breathing into man the desire for spiritual communion, and the ideal of an immortal life. He it is who first created healthy ambition, and then prepares us to attain to still nobler conquests than all we first desired.

"The Lord ye know is God indeed, Without our aid He did us make, We are His flock, He doth us feed, And for His sheep He doth us take."

We come to Him then because He first comes to us. We "love Him because He first loved us." We long for Him because in order to satisfy the craving of His nature for our happiness, "He spared not His own Son, but freely gave him up" for us.

The Church of God then is not an assembly of men for the worship of and discovery of a being who must be interested in us before He will help us, but is God's means of doing us good in ways which often we had never thought possible. Does this not relieve many of us from that soul-destroying and God-insulting fear that we are too great sinners for mercy,—too wretchedly feeble to be able to appease His anger or make it worth His while to save or listen to us? We often distrust God's Love more than we would that of our earthly parents. We are sure of their welcome home, but not

of His! The disciples thought that only the rich and powerful would be considered worth salvation. Some of the Jews were puzzled because Jesus troubled Himself with publicly bad people; and, similarly, we fear God will think us too far lost, too deeply bemired for deliverance! And yet He was always calling the lost sheep, and healing the sick, and being good to the friendless and outcast. How we wrong God! We do not make ourselves good. He takes us for His sheep, and teaches us by the object lesson of His life, and death, and glorious Resurrection how to "lead captivity captive, and give gifts to men."

"None can come to Me," says He, "except My Father draw Him." The whole process of salvation is *God"s* work, not ours. We may be passive, we may be rebellious; but it is "God that worketh in us to will and to do according to His good pleasure." Then, my brother, when you feel that the wish to be His has a place in your hearts, *be sure* that the great Shepherd *is taking* you for His sheep and leave

troubling any longer as to His not receiving you into His fold.

All this transforms our relation to the great King Jehovah. An antepast of eternal blessedness is placed before our erst fainting soul, and we live in a new atmosphere, and breathe the air of a redeemed nature. Those things we counted worthy are become as dross, and the gifts we looked upon askance become glorious and desirable in our eyes. When once we think of God in His right relation to us, we begin to well contemplate the traits of the Divine Nature and Character. As a child, just standing amazed before the awful realities of life, feels most gratefully the wisdom of the past parental discipline, so we adore the Divine Majesty of the Infinite love which has chastised us during our training, and give to our God the credit due for all His long-suffering grace and mercy. Even our own sense of unworthiness and insufficiency are for the nonce lost sight of in our wonder at the sublime salvation of our Heavenly King.

"() enter then His gates with praise, Approach with joy His courts unto, Praise, laud, and magnify His Name always, For it is seemly so to do."

Alas! that enthusiasm in religious worship and service should be found so little among us! The Church of Christ has been too much held in a leash and guided by a blind, cold, passionless fashion or convenance. It has been thought the best form to be severely emotionless in the House of Prayer; and we have almost been ashamed to let God see how much we admire and love Him in His household. is not seemly. Not only should we offer to Him the best music, the choicest product of every art, the richest service; but as the poor publican smote upon His breast, and feelingly confessed his own unworthiness, and as David danced before the Ark on its entry to the place of its rest, and as the simple Children of the East made Jerusalem's narrow streets ring with glad hosannahs, so the jubilate should shine upon our faces, and peal like a harmony of silver bells in

the multiple acts of our life. Why do we try to suppress our surging emotions at every great function and festival? Our brethren of the Greek Church have a very beautiful custom at Easter time. "He is risen," "He is risen," they cry, and gladly salute each other, with joyful countenances beaming forth the peace of a Divine afflatus. And we, on New Year's morn, roll back from us the burdens of an unsatisfactory past, and merrily wish each other a bright and fortunate future. Why should we be silent and stiff when we come into the presence of the Great Father? Should we not rather say: - "This is the Lord's day, let us be glad in it"; and as the miracles of His healing transform one after the other of us, "from glory unto glory," as by the working of the Spirit of the Lord, should we not cry, "This is the Lord's doing, it is marvellous in our eyes"?

> "For why? The Lord our God is good, His mercy is for ever sure, His truth at all times firmly stood, And shall from age to age endure."

Could we but go out to our daily round of working and waiting with this ringing in our ears! Oh, that we would remember all that God is willing and wanting to be to us. The joy of Cornelius ought to be ours. The ready faith of the Phillipian gaoler should flood our souls with peace, and fill our mouths with heartfelt praise. We should then, though in the world, live very near to heaven! We should unite, we may unite with the choristers above in the great Alleluia—

"To Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
To God, whom heaven and earth adore,
From men, and from the Angel-host,
Be praise and glory evermore."

God will never neglect us, never be at fault in our affairs. "His eyes behold, His eyelids try the children of men."

SERMON V.

"A State of War!"

(Ash Wednesday.)

1 St. Peter, V., 9.

"Whom resist steadfast in the faith,"

A S the struggle of the plant against apparently adverse forces in early spring, and the consequent period of consolidation of all plant life and energy and aim, fit the green tenderling for the burden and joy of blossom and seed shedding, so the Season of Fast and Vigil prepare the Christian plant for the demands of the coming trial of prosperity and adversity, of which every healthy and progressive life knows a blessed experience. Christians have been too ready to separate the Spirit life eternal from the work of the Soldier in the flesh, and in the contemplation of the joys of the Hereafter to lose sight of the burning questions

of the Here. Hence the church has been in great danger, in all ages, of yielding up to any who would relieve her, all her power,-that power with which her great Head has endued her, to influence the trend of popular thought, and the direction of popular action. She has thus often let slip opportunity and in reality delegated to the carnal mind and hand, the discharge of those functions for which she has sole authority and is pre-eminently fitted. Social questions have been dealt with without reference to her veto, and shelved without consideration of the claims of her leaders to direct by doctrine and inspire by enthusiasm. Thank God, the Church now is learning not only to take her rightful position in the van of human progress, but is also willing to prepare herself to place the very best and highest ideals of service before a disorganised and chaos-smitten world.

Arrogance can never produce senators, neither can an ignorant conceit develope a permanent system of a Divine government of man. In deepest humility alone can we commune with the hidden God, and receive from Him those laws and that nerve without which we dare not execute them.

For this reason we set apart a season in which by quiet life and thoughtful meditation we can come away, as it were, into a desert place apart, and talk with our Divine Master about those many mysteries, and otherwise doubtful matters, which perplex us in our daily, private, and public life.

The occasion is urgent, and we dare not trifle with the call of our Blessed Master. As before the events which culminated in Calvary and bright Gethsemane, He drew away to the hills of Ephraim His disciples, that there they might be fortified by His assurances, and convinced by His arguments and personal truth, so we are led by the custom and prayer of our Church to seek, like Job of old, the place where we may find out God, and be assured of His eternal sufficiency.

Events daily transpiring, current ravings of

irresponsible literary maniacs, the frothings in the lives of demented men and women of the venom of all uncleanness, the brazen tongue of the self-sufficient prophets, whose wish is parent to their inspiration, the demands of a plausible libertinism, and the agitation for the abolition of all restraint—human or Divine, while they do not drive us as chaff before the wind, lead us to earnestly desire a closer walk with God, and a more thorough appreciation of His wise counsels.

Like many rebels, they are scarce worthy of the ammunition we expend upon their conquest, but yet are forces, which, if not very vigorously attacked, will destroy all that is bright and hopeful in many lives. Like the boasting Midianite, they fight like brigands, or lanz-knechts, and will own any or no supreme banner, but also, like Midian, they entrap the unwary, they gather where they have not strewed, and would sap the peace of any organised community.

[&]quot;Christian, dost thou see them, On the holy ground,

How the troops of Midian Prowl and prowl around?"

Satan has no code of honour, no knight is he. "He was a liar from the beginning." The burglar and the foot-pad, the caviller and the sneak, are all his faithful and honoured servants. The flatterer and mischief-maker, the anarchist and the free-liver are the pastors of his synagogues, and his wolves in the sheep-fold. That which is noble, which is pure, which is spiritually minded, which is constructive, can have no common ground with these, any more than they can with Belial, their master. Toleration of wrong-doing is impossible. The victory, or even progress, of the one is of necessity destructive of its opposite. Indulgence of the senses, the sapping of the foundations of law, the decline of the supremacy of moral feeling, and the contempt for the teachings of Christian experience, involve the disruption of that upon which Man's hope is built, the destruction of that central ideal, or underlying Fact, the faith in which holds together society.

"Christians, up and smite them, Counting gain but loss, Smite them by the merit Of the holy Cross."

We must resist steadfastly any tendency to tolerate that which is anti-Christ, that which makes against that travail and progress which edifies Man.

And we must also be prepared for the logical sequence of our assertion of principle. Let us never forget that the Christian Church attacks the world, the flesh, and the devil. No selfrespecting Church of Christ can be always on the defensive. In the moment when we exclude the vile and lawless from a place among permissable sentiments, habits, and deeds, we declare war against the whole motley array of the things of iniquity. That war we must carry into the enemies' country. A mere academic declaration is not enough: we must act in accordance with our faith. When we assert the supremacy of the Cross we must lift up the Holy Emblem in our lives, so that its

chastening and cleansing efficacy may be proved in the eyes of all men. A defensive war is one of citadel attacks, of starvation, of siege and disease. In the ages gone by we see clearly that only where nations cast away the "Thou shalt not" as the ultimate rule of life, and sought to listen to the "Thou shalt" of the Saviour King, did they develope any power and permanent strength at all.

Alas! how often we are timorous, and fear to roll our burdens and *ourselves* upon the love of God. We say "We believe," but in the same breath we cry, "Help Thou my unbelief!"

"Christian dost thou feel them How they work within, Striving, tempting, luring, Goading unto sin?"

It often seems impossible that the Christian life can be lived without some special indulgence being granted. We often get fairly cornered, and, like Lazarus at Bethany, appear far beyond the saving help of our God. Satan then comes to us with golden promises, "All shall be thine

IF . . .?" Tempted, lured, driven, goaded forward to the pit! And, like brave men turned cowards at an unexpected onslaught, we tremble for our souls. Like St. Peter, before he learned to be steadfast, we deny our Lord, at heart, and our thoughts wander to the homes of those who know no cares and have "no bands even in death," who like Dives enjoy, while we like Lazarus are left for the dogs to heal. If there be one here whose cares have led him thus far, let him lift up his eyes to Heaven, for God can yet, and will yet, save all who look to Him for succour.

The newest craze had its prototype in another form in the age of Chrysostom, or Aurelius, or Nero, or of the Orsini. And yet God's hand broke the magic glass which confused men's vision, and set wrong for right. He will do it again. Let us be braver, because more faithful, and more masters of circumstances, because firmer in the stand consistently made against evil, because it is evil, and not because we are driven to fight.

"Christian never tremble, Never be downcast, Smite them by the virtue Of the Lenten fast."

But now comes the hardest trial of all. Conquered apparently by the mailed hand of vigorous offensive war, the enemies of the faith sneak like the Gibeonites of old into subjection, as professing members of Christ's Body. Here they foster discontent among the young. With hypocritical sanctimoniousness they try to undermine the discipline of the Church. "That stern and uncompromising hostility toward antichrist, perhaps necessary in the past, is no longer required in the hour of peace." The young who have waited in ease with their mothers in Gilead while their fathers fought in the Wars of Israel, cannot endure the martial training of the self-denying ordinances of the Church, they must be coaxed by ease," etc.

> "Christian, dost thou hear them, How they speak thee fair? Always fast and vigil? Always watch and prayer?"

"Humour the young," they say, "or they will leave their Father's God." Can young men be trained for struggle by a dispensation of indulgence? Will they retain their manhood for long if perennially treated as babes?

No! Only by chastening can the life be developed. Only under the Cross can we come near our inspiration. Only in the solitary place alone with the Great Teacher, can we grow out into complete Christian manhood.

"Christian answer boldly,
While I live, I pray,
Peace shall follow battle,
Night shall end in day."

The struggle and affliction of the battle *they* know who oppose us; but they have not that "same hope that is in us,"

"Christ in us the hope of glory."

They are equally troubled with ourselves, but in them all trouble makes their lives measurably sourer, sadder, and more hopeless, until they cry at last, "Vanity of Vanity, all is Vanity," while we know in whom we trust. And we know that He "all our sorrows shares." The result of *our* travail is increased power to work. There is in all His divine and loveful wisdom, a word pregnant with a future sweet and certain to us.

"Well I know thy trouble,
O my servant true,
Thou art very weary,
I was weary, too.
But that toil shall make thee
Some day all mine own,
And the end of sorrow
Shall be near my, throne."

Let us then resist steadfastly!

SERMON VI.

"The Waiting Guest."

(Lent 1.)

REVELATIONS III., 20.

"Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him."

HOWEVER imperceptible the process by which Our Redeemer makes His glorifying influence felt, it can only be savingly a blessing to us when He comes with our full consent, and excites in our breast sympathetic response.

Through all the centuries, God in Christ has been kept at the Door of our inner self and of our citadel of Man-soul, in the great multitude of those occasions or opportunities in which He could have saved our race and our nation from those blunders and that confusion, in connection

with which the Church's aggressive work has become weak and uncertain, and her own witness, alas! too often that of a house sadly rebellious and schismatic. While we were seeking to elaborate policies, and propagate life as well as we could, we at the same time lost sight of the fact that a would-be Guest, a Wise Counsellor, the Captain of our Church army, was waiting unadmitted at our doors.

And even we, at this time of greater spirituality in desire and in conception, fail to realize the fact of the ever-presence of the Saviour of Men, and the certainty and finality which would arise from a ready submission of all our schemes for His approval and amendment. And all this because we do not recognize the truth as it is in the witness of God in all ages. God can make of us what he will, but we only can profit when we are in harmony with Him. He called Cyrus, and made him an instrument of His righteous work in Israel; yet we do not read that Cyrus forsook the worship of Bel and turned to that of Jehovah. Domitian, Diocle-

tian, Nero, Herod, and Titus, were His tools by which He brought out the fine lines and glorious brightness of the Christian Church; and none of these ever became pillars in the House of the Lord, and helpers about the Altar of our God!

The profligate Alexander, the jealous potentates in the dark ages of our continental history, the monsters of the first French Revolution. and numberless others, contributed at the will of Him who "maketh the wrath of men to praise Him," to the exaltation of the Cross and Crown as the result of those mysterious deeds of Atheism and darkness which it shames man even to think of now; and yet we hear not of their testimony to the saving health of the work in them of the Nazarene, whom they hated as Death hates Life! God can use us, yea, He can fashion us by the conflict of evil forces. He can evolve from chaos the world of civilization, and sensible policy, and even social reform. But only when we are willing to open the door of our affections, can He

transform our nature and change our desires of heart.

Have we received the Redeemer? Have we honestly made trial of His power? Alas!

The reason why Christians are still in the minority in all the earth, is not that we have not had missionaries enough scattered among the heathen, so much as because the doors of our own hearts at home have been kept rigidly locked against a true submission to the King of Kings. We are willing to enter heaven by the merits of Jesus, but our hearts exclaim "we will not have this man to reign over us."

We have been buried with the Holy Saviour in Baptism, and have professed His Name, and our faith in His Name, every Sabbath, in the Creed we confess our adhesion to. We have declared our faith in His judgment and reward. But our act, in so doing, has been often merely formal; and He has been persistently ignored in most of the enterprises and engagements of our daily life, and practically denied the right

to adjudicate in matters of conscience which are raised in many of the schemes and designs which form the backbone of our business lives. We claim and exercise the right to admit Him into our lives only on convenient occasions, and to forget Him when our profit or pleasure might be affected by His Presence.

"O Jesus Thou art standing,
Outside the fast closed door,
In lowly patience waiting
To pass the threshold o'er."

No recognition merely of the Saviour can save us or make Christian manhood of us. No squaring of our outward lives by the standard of a quasi-Christian conventualism can develop the Divine human within us. Only an honest, cordial, and trustful receiving of the Saviour, with all risks and all conditions, which such a reception may involve, can meet our case.

Let us count the cost! We may be ridiculed as religious faddists, *disliked* as innovators, *hated* as an outspoken conscience always is, contemned as not wise in our generation. Can

we face this? We may find ourselves involved in a political struggle for the supremacy of religion when we love peace and ease. We may even be persecuted, misunderstood, smitten with the scourge of the mockery of an ignorant and unkind populace, bruised by the blows of blind prejudice, aye even, like our Lord, crucified in the company of wicked men and hateful thoughts. Can we dare this for Life immortal? Do not be deceived. All this may fall to our lot, if we admit the husbandman's Lord, whose fan is in His hand, and who will thoroughly purge His floor. These are stirring times, when many disciples will have to submit to contumely and reproach for Christ's sake. He waits at the door. Will you let Him in? Choose ye this day whom ye will serve. If God, then we must open the door. We cannot in reason, seek the reward, and decline the work.

> "Shame on us Christian Brethren, His name and sign who bear, O shame, thrice shame upon us, To keep Him standing there."

But the Lord waits not so passively. He knocks. If any here saw a friend in deadly peril and asleep, would he wait silent and submissively until the hour of sleep had passed?

And it is because Jesus is our Friend that He knocks, sometimes as the patter of the rain drops in the summer shower, sometimes as the thunder shaking the earth with its mighty voice. Always His is the voice of love.

Three Hebrew sons were once in great danger of apostacism and of its after remorse and wretchedness: God knocked and led them triumphantly through the fiery furnace.

Once in Shunem a woman fell into sin, and God knocked at her mother's heart and turned her love back, by the restoration of her forfeited son.

Once in Canaan a young man was giving himself up to mean artifices and unfilial conduct until he feared for the results of his fraud and was driven a wanderer from his over-tender mother, that he might learn those lessons from angels ascending and descending from God,

which might fit him to become the patriarchal ancestor of descendants as the sand of the sea for multitude. And were not nearly all the miracles of Jesus so many knockings at the door of men's hearts, to persuade them of His power to save, and of their great calling to service? Just in this way He knocks at our door.

Sometimes when our minds are set upon the pulling down barns to build greater, and upon an assured future, He knocks at our door with the spear of the Sabaean, or with the hurtling sound raised by a commercial whirlwind of panic.

When we are engrossed with our family, and shut out the world and all outside responsibility, that we may be happy in the little circle of our home life, a sickness befalls some dear one, and the gentle physician, though groaning in spirit, does not heal, but knocks at the door of our hearts until we learn that God's claims must be honoured.

Again, when all around is pregnant with a

sense of the uncertain, and we shiver in the hopelessness of despair in life, Christ knocks, in the advent of a friend in need, a joy that cometh in the morning, a golden glory upon the rim of a sad grey cloud, and in the clear shining of the Eternal Sun of hope and peace.

Only the intoxicated reveller says "something happened." Christ knocked, is knocking still,

"You use no other friend so ill."

"O Jesus Thou art knocking,
And, lo! that Hand is scarr'd,
And thorns Thy Brow encircle,
And tears Thy Face have marred:
O Love, that passeth knowledge,
So patiently to wait;
O sin that hath no equal,
So fast to bar the gate."

Then the *promise* must not be forgotten, for upon this depends largely the spirit in which we open the door to Christ. Now this promise is very plain. If we will hear and open, He "will come in to us." He will become our Host and Guest in one, All in All to them that believe.

Of course acceptance of Christ's salvation involves submission to His judgment; but not this alone. There is the other side: we shall be fortified by His presence and residence with us. "I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me."

A man never is hindered by the presence of Christ in his life; he is helped by it. While he is unable any longer, perhaps, to pursue certain means to an end, because these are unchristian means, he becomes independent of these methods, for, says the apostle, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." And neither tribulation, nor distress, nor famine, nor sword, nor pestilence can separate from the love of Christ.

Herein lies the secret of the Church's strength. God chooses the weak, and the unlikely, and the earthern vessel; and with these apparently feeble forces brings to the ground the pride of human conceit. As S. Aidan said, "When the way by land and water was closed, there still remained Heaven's way."

And it is remarkable how God does lift up the hands that hang down and confirm the feeble knees, when once we let Him in to sup with us.

Jesus not only wipes away the tears from our eyes, but He takes away the sting of bitterness from our sorrows. He not only smooths the wrinkles from our life, but He "renews our spirit from day to day," until He makes of us full, happy, helpful men and women. Is not this worth a little faith? Dare we not open the door for the Saviour?

In this Blessed Season of fast and serious thought, can we not weigh in the balances our unsaved nature as against the joys and hopes of the New Man Christ would have us to become?

O let us receive Him and trust Him Who loveth our soul! Let us not open the door ajar as suspecting either His will or His power, but throw it open eagerly as to welcome a dear friend from afar. Let the shutters be taken down, and the burnt down lamps be extinguished, that our souls may be brightened by

the sunlight of His presence and the light of His countenance.

"O Jesu Thou art pleading
In accents meek and low;
I died for you, My children,
And will ye treat me so?
O Lord with shame and sorrow
We open now the door,
Dear Saviour enter, enter,
And leave us never more."

SERMON VII.

"The Righteous Thirst!"

(Lent.)

PSALMS, XLII., 1 & 2.

"As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?"

"THE days will come when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and ye shall not see it." So spake the Gentle Teacher to His disciples when He foresaw the difficulties of the bereft learners after His Ascension. And truly is this an expression of the religious soul, whether the disciple be an aged and persecuted saint, or a little wondering child. We have all, as children, wished we could have stood near Jesus, even in His greatest troubles, and watched the act, and heard the word which restored the lost sense,

cast out the usurping demon, cleansed the shunned and degraded leper, and inspired the common-people with new hope and simple trust. As we grow older, we long for the sight of a present Saviour, for "gods to go before us," for the words that make hearts burn within our breasts, and for the chaste smile as He looked upon the tenderlings of the flocks. We wonder at that marvellous spirit, so full of virtue, which everywhere did good, and inspired to effort born of hope. Could we have been with Him in His journeys, how much more firmly and bravely we could have met the opposition of adverse forces, and seen through the chicanery of a plausible craft in the teaching of selfconstituted, and unauthorised prophets and leaders. There are so many wrongs that seem to go unrighted, so much of devotion to service that we never see rewarded, so many recognised laws which are productive of, as well as conducive to, unrighteousness and inequality, that we long for a face-to-face view, viva voce conversation with the Redeemer Himself.

And the power of God is so great, and the request so small, that we, like the disciples, often wonder that He does not manifest Himself more to His faithful servants. Yet only in the labour, and thought, and patience involved in the search for His dwelling-place can He prepare us for that study and imitation of His nature, which will give us the power we need. It is said the ancient Balleares used to place their children's meals in the branches of the trees, and make the little ones knock them from their lofty shelves before they were allowed to eat, in order that they might attain that skill in the use of the sling and stone, which made their fathers valued mercenaries in any warfare. It was hard for a father to watch the hungry face of his child as he made one attempt after another; but it was love and duty which nerved him to the task. Only by discipline of this kind could he equip his offspring for the harder struggle of life. We ought not to rebel if our Father in Heaven, who pitieth them that fear Him, while He yet chastens them by suffering,

should be apparently deaf when we cry out for these appearings in His glory. For in the self-restraint with which he hides from us, He displays the greater love. The Lord Jesus told the disciples that though He "loved them unto the end," He still was about to leave them,—for, said He, it is "expedient for you that I go away."

Neither ought we to so readily agree that close fellowship with Christ is no longer, in this age of prosaic common-places, a possibility. Christians should try to get as near to Him as the Apostles ever were. "This kind goeth not out, save by prayer and fasting." Our Ambitions should not be less high than those of Job, nor our labour and self-denial less either. We should long to be better, more spiritual and more Christlike.

This can only be reached to in service. A Convention for purposes of introspective study and meditation will never make *Men*, who are able to associate with Christ. Even if they all marvel, and say, we never saw this before, or

go to the extent of assuring themselves that "He doeth all things well," their faith and power will break down when Christ makes them wait upon the hungry thousands, and wash the lepers and diseased in Siloam's cooling waters, and sit down to eat and drink with publican and sinner, and, generally speaking, "to render unto Cæsar the things that be Cæsar's and unto God the things that be God's." No! the nearness to Christ is only to be attained where the battle is hottest, and the truth most makes us free to do and dare for the commonweal.

"Nearer my God to Thee,
Nearer to Thee,
Even though it be a Cross
That raiseth me.
Still all my song shall be,
Nearer my God to Thee,
Nearer to Thee."

But at the very outset we are sure to receive a terrible but inevitable check, as our soul turns to the contrast between the earthly ideal and often sordid motives of our lives with the unspeakable Majesty of the ever resplendent brightness of the Divine Love.

What is man that the Almighty should take such trouble in the restoration of him. God in very deed dwell with Men?" Is it possible that the Finite can have "mortality swallowed up of life?" Will the human thirst be ever satisfied by drinking of the "Living Water?" Or, is the whole Revelation in Jesus Christ a mistake? Does it treat of a Utopia which only may encourage,-even exalt the ideal,—but not transform, nor eternally inspire the development of Man? Have we been too sanguine? Do we? Can we know anything of an immortality of desire and growth and life? Can we be sure of a single thing? A little child often has his doubts of the perfection of his parents, and especially wonders when the great might of his father meets its match, and the child's standard of completion seems to bow before circumstances, and take a denial from evident Providence. So we have our misgivings about God. We do not doubt Him,

but we fear for His Power and Influence when iniquity reigns and upright innocency pays the penalty of her assertion of Truth. How long, O Lord, how long? is at times our cry, when the law of the Creator does not appear to be supreme. "We trusted," said the disciples, "that this had been He which should have redeemed Israel!" But now, alas! Has the glory indeed departed? Is the Christian Religion only one of those beautiful embodiments of inspiration which, as in other nations, have in the course of Nature's lawful development, helped peoples to satisfy the demand of the time upon their powers?

Discouragements like these come upon us at the early as well as at the later stages of our Christian pilgrimage, and fight as we may, and do, against their insidious influence, they make the day very dark and sad for a space of time. We must go up the "Valley of the Shadow," and somehow the sun over the hill does not reach us at all times, even at noon.

If our life ideal is merely a religious effort

evolved from considerations of true and false, of abiding and transitory,—if, in short, we can only believe in the apparent, and if all is concluded under the law, we must at last become lax and heartless, and lose our hope in and hold on the future. But thanks be unto God who hath given us the victory through Jesus Christ, we have a faith in a personal Saviour to bear us through the deluge of our reason, and that wherein the law was weak is fulfilled in the Person of our Deliverer, Jesus Christ the Lord. Faith in Jesus is wisely and lovingly then made the central foundation, the key-stone of the Arch of God's Temple of Life. We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us, and gave Himself for us. He hath made us kings and priests unto God.

"Though like a wanderer,

The sun gone down,
Darkness comes over me,

My rest a stone.

Yet in my dreams I'd be
Nearer my God to Thee,

Nearer to Thee."

Job saw in God a Person grander than all man's highest thought—One who would stand by him and be to him a Vindicator and Redeemer.

The Psalmist saw in Him One "whose ways are not as our ways, nor His thoughts as our thoughts," One whose ideals and power were as much higher than man's as the heavens are lift up above the earth. "Bow down Thine ear unto me and hear me." "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." "As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him." When "sin abounds, grace doth much more abound," says the Apostle; and this grace, because we have a Personal Saviour who knoweth our frame, and who remembereth that we are but dust.

"Nearer my God to Thee" is then the prayer of the Christian when he comes into conflict with evil, or finds that he also is afflicted in the Providence of God.

Brethren here is our refuge in the hour of commercial panic, of the whirlwind of iniquity,

of the deep pain we feel when disgrace befalls our dearest, and trouble our nearest ones. Says Job, "Though He slay me, yet will I put my trust in Him."

"The Mercy of God is from everlasting."

"Nearer my God to Thee,

There let my way appear,

Steps into Heaven,

All that Thou sendest me,

In mercy given,

Angels to beckon me,

Nearer my God to Thee, nearer to Thee."

Trouble and discouragement are then the parents of hope to the Christian. They compel us to seek and to find a God who, with the deep sympathy of Man, has the deeper love of a Spirit Father, and the power of an Omnipotent Saviour.

Once we find ourselves believing in this Friend of Man, our fears and misgivings flee away as the tempestuous winds and deluging waters of a winter's night when we knock at the portal of the House of Mercy, where we are ushered into the family circle, and in the

warm glow of the present, receive help which we store for the battle with the elements which is to follow when again the "King's business requireth haste."

And all through the drenching rain and icy cold we pass unhurt; for hope has returned to us through personal sympathy. And as the Messenger passes to and fro in the execution of His Master's will, as the darts of envenomed hate are hurled upon him, as the buffetings of adverse gales would impede his progress, and lions roar, and the laughter of fools assails him, he sees no trouble that God will not bring him through triumphant. And as he passes the Castle Doubting, he dreams of the pearly gates of the New Jerusalem, and hears the Welcome Home of the angel choir, and makes the woods and hills echo with the confident reply:—

"Then with my waking thoughts,

Bright with Thy praise,

Out of my stony griefs

Bethels I'll raise;

So by my woes to be

Nearer my God to Thee, Nearer to Thee."

"My soul thirsteth for God, For the living God: When shall I come And appear before God."

"As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God."

SERMON VIII.

"The Eve of Sacrifice!"

(Lent, Palm Sunday.)

GAL. VI., 14.

"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

THE church has ever venerated the sign of her leader's human humiliation and divine triumph. The fame of this symbol has reached where the language and customs of civilized Christians are unknown or despised. When the fierce hordes of southern Germany desolated the fair cities of fruitful Italy, and sweet womanhood and venerable age, and tender childhood dyed the broad blades with their blood, it is yet related that the sign of the Cross restrained the rough barbarian, and protected thousands who put their trust in God

under the shadow of its guardian care. And when true religion was at its lowest ebb in the dark days of the church's history, we read of almost miraculous powers being exerted through the use of this sign.

And there is in the bosom of the church at this present age of iconoclasm a sweet and hallowed association which appeals to the patriot saint as none other can. In our church buildings it occupies the holiest place, reminding us of the daily struggle, the persistent faith, and the final victory which Christ's disciples experience in their chequered lives.. In our ornament and emblazonment it asserts the authority by which we believe, and speak, and do, as God gives us opportunity and strength. We use it in the proud moment when our little ones are dedicated to God at the font; and in the hour of death, the glorious cross is an inspiration of hope, a battle cry for the final struggle in which we "lead captivity captive."

But what does it mean? Let us not in ignorance allow this habit to remain a habit

only. What does the cross signify? On the bloodstained battle ground it means "God with man reconciling him by pain and suffering to Himself." It means the chastening of affliction and the removal of the sting of death. Is this the meaning to us of this sign? Surely it should be so, for it is more than the coat-of-arms of a community: it is "the sign of the coming of the Son of Man, and the representation of the means of man's salvation. What did it appear to the son of Mary as he stood on the Mount of Olives, on that memorable day when the air rang again with the exultant Hosannah? The cross was very present to Him then. As he beheld the richly verdant gardens of the wealthy ones of that powerful city, and saw the people gathering, in their hundreds, from all parts of the known world, to pay their devotions at the Feast of that Passover, wherein Jehovah had set His people free in Egypt, and saw the gleaming walls of that stately Temple which Herod had built in recognition of the rank of God's People in the Empire, there was ever

before Him a darkened landscape and a gloomy foreground in which He was soon to be of all the forsaken, pitied, mocked, slain, yet triumphant and victorious centre. And while the children's voices rang out clear and sweet, and and the great ones looked hatred and suspicion, He saw that cross, and accepted it with joy. So full was He of anticipatory thanksgiving, that when the elders would have restrained the little choristers, he reproved them, saying "if these hold their peace, the very stones themselves will cry out." He saw what they did not. They thought a popular riot would involve the city with the Roman governor, and result in their being fined at least. He saw the people, the sons from afar hasting to bow before His salvation, and to serve under His Cross. That which to them meant loss, to Him meant such gain for mankind, that He bowed Himself to the stroke and set His face steadfastly toward Calvary. They made their boast in the beautiful Temple, and in the smile of Pilate, and in the settled government under which much profit

attended their business efforts. To them the Cross was a symbol of shame. When He told them He was neither their Messiah nor the prophet which they expected, but the Son of Man who should suffer many things, they lifted up their haughty faces and incredulously asked, "Who then is this Son of Man?" But the Christian makes His boast in this very Son of Man who should be crucified between two malefactors.

The Temple was soon burned, the rich and prosperous and influential of the Jewish citizens were robbed by Romans, and by their own countrymen, and these admitted the assassins to help them to save them from the very nation which had given them settled government, and the verdant grounds, scented with beautiful flowers and spice woods, were destroyed for defensive purposes not long after Jesus wept over Jerusalem.

What is greatness? and what wealth and influence that we can set a permanent value upon them? As a Refuge, are they not vanity?

For when all is gone that we thought never could be removed, and when systems and schemes, and all intrigues are exposed in nakedness, Christ's Cross is the search light which most beshames a mean and empty pride.

- "When I survey the wondrous Cross
 On which the Prince of Glory died,
 My richest gain I count but loss,
 And pour contempt on all my pride."
- "Forbid it Lord that I should boast Save in the Cross of Christ my God, All the vain things that charm me most I sacrifice them to His Blood."

But the Cross is an object lesson teaching us something of the value of the Divine Love. What do we see? Some short time before this tragedy was enacted He had been praying in deep agony. "And what shall I now say? Father save me from this hour? But for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Thy Name." And this is just what is before us now. The Name of God depended upon His fulfilment of promise, and He had promised to save Man by Christ. "By His knowledge

shall my righteous servant justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities."

The salvation of man and the glory of God both depended upon the Cross. Only when *crucified* could He "draw all men to Him," and therefore He came to die for the life of men.

And as He entered Jerusalem and encountered the jealous spite of the Jews, followed by one whom He knew should betray Him, and rode through the crowds of acclaiming Orientals who soon would yell and hoot and hiss and spit upon Him and crave His execution, He had all this in His mind. With escape possible, and Divine Power in His hands, He yet, for the love He bore mankind, trod the steep ascent, and overcame the fear of death.

Death is never anything but repelling even to other men who see not a great future opening up before them, and yet He "was led as a lamb to the slaughter." He laid down His life for these very ungrateful people and for their successors, that He might save them from their sins, and from the terrible suffering that

sin always brings in its train. Is this not Love—pure and simple Love?

But more than this, Love of the sinner always involves to the pure mind suffering for the sin! Christ suffered for our sins. He mourned for the people of Jerusalem who had seen so many of His mighty works unsaved, and alas, as yet, unrepentant. He who could see the future Jerusalem hemmed in, hungry and foodless, torn by factions, betrayed and dismantled, wept for them, suffered for them. He knew as well as any that the Cross does not immediately win and enjoy the crown; and that He could not even save the Jews in so short a space of time from their awful iniquity, and its sequel in exile or worse.

"See from His Head, His hands, His feet, Sorrow and Love flow mingled down, Did e'er such Love and Sorrow meet? Or thorns compose so rich a Crown?"

The love of Christ for men is not to be compared with that of the greatest philanthropists we know of. No missionary among the savage

heathen ever yearned over his hard-hearted charge as our Saviour does over us. No mother ever loved her first-born as He does us. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." Christ so loved us that having loved His own He loved them unto the end. Can we not then believe that He does suffer when we persist in coming short of the glory of His Cross, when we wilfully choose the way of pride that leads to destruction, and refuse the chastening of the Lord which brings forth peace? The way of the Cross is the only way of peace.

And surely no attitude could draw men to Christ more than this determination of His to lead us to the bright and happy heaven life, here and hereafter. When we see Him in whom was no sin set Himself to go through all the dreadful experience of unpopularity and suspicion and despite, which culminated in the Cross, all within us that is worthy and manly responds in gratitude. We find in Christ an Ideal Leader. Here is One who knows our

frame, and with us partaker in all human adversity of condition, conquering as even the simple little children never dreamed could be possible. Knowing what was in store for Him, He yet accepts their tribute of praise. As a conqueror He entered the temple, and as engaging in a contest, the issue of which was certain victory, He bowed Himself and bore our burden, and took away the sin of the world.

Did ever human leader the like of this? Search through the annals of the ages. Is there one to compare with Him? Is there any other to whom we are prepared to say, Be thou Head, and let us be the members?

Young men and maidens seeking an object in life, you want to be great, and need a perfect pattern. Can you find any other than this?

Old men and matrons, have you ever in your wide and varied experience met with a Way, which was also the Truth and the Life. One who could consolidate your powers, inspire your disheartened desires, and make you swell with delight as this Being, this Man, this God?

Children just entering upon serious preparation, here is a Plan of Life, a Scheme of Preparation, which will fit you to be great in service, glorious in fruitbearing, which will make you grow in spirit and in mind, until you come to the place where He is. He will never fail you. No praise you offer will be refused or undervalued by Him; for out of the lips of babes and sucklings is *perfect* praise. Will you not give yourselves to be prepared by His Spirit, to be chastened by His pure touch?

Ah! my brethren, what a Prince of Peace is this!—Who made peace by yielding His back to the smiters, and won life immortal for you by laying down His own precious life, and shedding His own blood.

And when we are redeemed by such a Saviour, called into the field by such a Captain, persuaded from the wilderness of an empty and aimless life by such a Shepherd, what can we say and do?

Shall we remain silent while our sins are borne by Him? Or shall we *join* with Him under the blood-red Banner which was unfurled on Calvary's Green Hill? We are too much in danger of apostasy—of "standing off" from Jesus.

God forbid that we should continue so callous, so unsympathetic—so ungrateful!

"To Christ, Who won for sinners grace, By bitter grief and anguish sore, Be praise from all the ransomed race, For ever and for evermore."

SERMON IX.

"A Spectacle and a Salvation!"

1 PETER, VII.

"Unto you, therefore, which believe, He is precious; but unto them which disbelieve, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is become the head of the corner."

HEN a great battle has been won at the cost of many precious lives, the first news is that of victory, and all the clarions of a nation's joy break forth into glad sounds of jubilations. The capture of a strategic position, salvation from a condition of danger, the crippling of a hostile army, fill us with a satisfaction which we are unable to contain—which must find utterance in exuberations of gladness. But when the roll is called, and the report is sent home of the lavish expenditure of the lives of the young, the valiant, the

promising, and the helpful, our hearts are sad, our indignation burns against the evil hearts and the blundering selfishness of those who compelled the necessity for defence, or aggressive action, and our whole soul mourns for the dire and awful results of the dearly-bought victory.

Though we are none the less proud of the shot-riddled ensign which has ruled the day, we cannot forget the shedding of blood, by which the waving emblem has been preserved unsullied and honourable.

To-day, the Church of Christ exults in the victory won on Calvary, and to-day our soul thrills with peace assured, as those parched lips of the Son of Man triumphantly cry, "It is finished;" but what a cost to man! "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth." All the blood shed in all the wars of Christendom were as nothing in comparison to the blood He so freely poured out for His foes, whom yet He loved.

It was an awful tragedy--the death of this Pure Man, the final emptying of Himself of this Divine Being on the Cross. As we gaze in spirit upon that mighty sacrifice, that divine deed, that humbling of Himself, we are led to cry in shame, "What is man," or "the son of man," that he was worthy in the eyes of a gracious Providence of this great offering. And alas! what is the enormity of the sin which demanded a redemption so great as His salvation. Not His friends alone, but His executioners, were struck with amazement, and the mystery of an inscrutable Providence became to all more deeply involved, as they once more called to mind the undefiled and helpful life which to them seemed taken away for ever. Savages, who knew not God, have often been won to believe in the loving personality of the Deity, by the relation of the story of the Cross, after they had dismissed the miracles as either inventions, or the effect of magic. Since the world began, his has always been regarded the highest and most magnanimous love which

laid down life for one's friends; but here the first met with One who emptied Himself to enrich His foes, Who when He was reviled, reviled not again, and blessed those who were His murderers.

And as long after the national mind has forgotten the peculiar advantages derived by numerous engagements, the names and natures of heroes are dear to the home and heart of a grateful people, so we now are chiefly drawn to the study of the Divine Scheme of Redemption, by the Story and study of the Cross of Christ.

How many of us have not felt our load of care lifted in the moment of adoration before the associations of the Cross? All about the scene of Golgotha is deeply interwoven into our own religious experience. The picture of those faithful women near the rude cross, whom the Roman soldiers had not heart to drive away, the agonized faces of those in the crowd of madly-inflamed bigots, who stood to watch the end of the apparently exposed imposture of Him who *led the people*, the respectful awe of

the rough soldiers while they witnessed and brought to pass the last torture of a people-forsaken idol. And then the grand triumphal march of those events, which were only possible as the sequel of such a transaction. Are these not written in our own mortal agony, our own affections, our own doubts and misgivings. The Christian in his griefs, in his wrestle, in his need, flies naturally to the Cross. "He considers Him, lest he should faint in his mind," he looks off unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of his faith. For in the Cross is Peace, though it be prepared in agony and shame, and darkness of half despair.

"Sweet the moments, rich in blessing, Which before the Cross I spent, Life, and health, and all possessing From the sinner's dying Friend."

Then the Cross is precious to us as a banner beneath which to fight upward our way to peace and power. It is a river making glad the heart of men, for, wherever the Crucified Christ is embodied in our suffering, our burden is lifted, our woe is lightened, and our faith in our Godgiven power and mission becomes an inspiration to effort, and an incentive to noble aspirations.

Compare the ideals of the pagan, unchurched world with those of the Christian world. On the one hand, we find a grasping for rank and arbitrary power for the individual, reckless of the consequences to those who might have to take the objective place in the political economy of an irresponsible, carnal despotism, or tyranny, while on the other hand, we find the greatest seeking to serve the less, the strong devoting themselves to the support of the weak, and all the Christian's prayer and effort directed to the restoration to power of others, the salvation of the sick and sorrowful and despairing. Behold the effects of the Cross Life in the marvellous expansion, and still more marvellous development, of our colonial possessions. This is often proudly assumed to arise from the influence of natural and climatic causes operating upon the Imperial British Race. How do we trace our original national capacity for conquest and construction? To the emotional Kelt, who so soon became the slave or alien race of Angle-Land? To the fierce Danish and Saxon pirate, who sacked our churches and wasted our fair land in turns? To the haughty and often perfidious Norman, who ruled with a rod of iron a brave and Christian race? To whom shall we seek as the spirit which permeated the English nation, until now nations unknown to us sue for our protection and help from afar.

Surely it is the Cross of Christ which out of unlikely material has built up a nation zealous of good works, and vigilant as a deliverer in the hour of oppression. However mistaken some of our ideals have been, however rude our many attempts to save the world, it is the Cross which has saved our land. Did not the most orderly and valiant Crusaders come from England? Did not the martyrs of all ages, in our land, witness to the truth of this statement, that where men became brave, it was the Faith in the Cross which built them up, which sent them everywhere as ministers of mercy, as explorers

of God's great earth, as colonizers of the fertile but neglected lands, and as teachers of a depraved and degraded and lost heathendom. Even where men were not what we consider typical saints, when their hand was rough, and their mercy little apparent, the influence of their teaching for many generations made them trusted where others were feared, and followed where others were forsaken. Our Wellington, our Gordon, our Hannington, our Selwyn, our Wilberforce, our Howard of Effingham, our Drake, our Latimer, our Lawrence, and thousands of others—were these not men who viewed the Cross as the culmination of all glories, and who learned from it the lessons of endurance, of noble aim, and splendid achievement?

[&]quot;Here I rest for ever viewing
Mercy poured in streams of Blood,
Precious drops my soul bedewing,
Plead and claim my peace with God."

[&]quot;Truly Blessed is the station Low before His Cross to lie, Whilst I see Divine Compassion Beaming in His languid eye."

What nation would have taxed itself as we did, when the slaves had to be freed, and all this because we believed that righteous sacrifice alone could win a righteous reward. What things were counted gain we valued not, that we might be found with the righteousness of God in us. What things were counted loss we willingly endured, that right might be done, and man exalted before His Maker. The soldier looks upon his tattered ensigns as they hang in the great Cathedral, and his thoughts turn to the fatal ride which made his enemies quail before British pluck and obedience to command, or he thinks of the dash of the battalions at Alma, or the rout of Plassey, the check of Corunna, or of the brave Wolfe before Ouebec. The farmer sees the subdued Wash, and the verdant Fen, and the smiling corn on many a slope where deeds of desolation and despair, and the spirit of failure alone used to be realised, and he admires the ardour with which nature was bridled, and man blessed by the countless dykes and intakes of our fathers. Let these

look beyond, and all the strength we as a nation possess, all the opportunities which cry aloud for us proceed from Calvary. To us who believe He is indeed precious who laid down His life there.

But this were a barren Passion Day did we sit down only with a thanksgiving in our hearts. The wrongs that are in the land still cause wounds without due cause; the weeping of deserted households still thrill us with pain; the pinched face and dwarfed stature and dreary outlook of waifs and strays haunt us even in our villages. Injustice still revels in many conditions and forms. We have to see to it that Christ dies not in vain to the millions who yet have not fully realised His saving grace. Do we believe that on the Cross He is really going to draw all men to Himself? The Stone which the builders disallowed is going to be recognised as the Head of the Corner. "It is the Lord's doing, and is marvellous in our eyes," and chiefly marvellous because He has deigned to choose us, of all others, as His agents.

Perhaps some here fail to see how they can advance the Cause of the Cross in the giving of hearts to the Chinese, and the Spirit of God to the Papuans, and the desire for a humane spirit to the cruel Turk. That is not at present your supreme concern. Is God in the Crucified Christ, to you, the Head of every motive, and ambition, and desire? In your home is the Sacrifice of Jesus the Example and the Power by which you deny yourself, and do great things to the glory of Himself and of the Manhood He has created? God will reconcile all things unto Himself, and you are called to help that work forward in your own sphere, according to your own ability. Are you obeying the call? Had Paul never known Nero's Court, he had not known either the supporting and constraining love with which he laboured for so long in that pagan abode of hard cruelty.

> "Lord, in ceaseless contemplation Fix my thankful heart on Thee, Till I taste Thy full salvation, And Thine unveil'd glory see."

SERMON X.

"Victory! Victory!"

(Easter.)

REVELATIONS I., 18.

"I am He that liveth and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."

DEATH is to us a terrible nightmare without hope in Christ. Even if we have no knowledge or certainty of a future state—a future day of rewards and punishment, we shrink at the alarms of the great and dreaded reaper; and though we know we are in the presence of the foe in the midst of our life, we put his image far from our minds, and banish all thought of him from our pleasures and our moments of joy. The wee child dislikes the possible decease from his life and looks upon him as the invariable spoiler of his race.

In the days of Christ, there were two great schools, both in Jewish and Pagan theologies, the one holding that as this life could be completed without a future, no future existed for those who had passed the flood,—the other maintaining that the laws and phenomena of nature, as well as the revelation to the sages of all religions which they believed to have been made, all inferred the necessity for a fuller, more abiding experience, after that mortality had wrought its power upon our declining life. But both alike dreaded its approach; for to one death meant extinction, and to the other the usher of possible punishment or unknown experiences or conditions.

And when we place in the ground what we feel to be a seed from which our friends shall, glorious, rise at the last day, there is sorrow and sadness unspeakable always inseparable from the view we form of the nature of the great bereaver and impoverisher of men.

The Christian religion brings in a glorious certainty, that God has not left his work in

each one of us incomplete or exposed to the full influence of real death. And He who calmly asserted that "before Abraham was He is," has taught us that His life cannot be extinguished even by death, but is in the hands of the Great Giver.

The Agnostic may sneer at the simple record of the wonderful resurrection and at the credulity of the witnesses of remarkable phenomena in the garden at Gethsemane, or may speciously explain the apparent death and apparent rising again of Jesus; but we decline to vield our blessed hope at the first babble of ignorance, even when that ignorance is covered by the hiding wing of assumptive arrogance. All that they can prove against the Christian position is that they, by the exercise of that wisdom that knew not God, could not see any reason which they were bound to accept. The evidence of nature, the experience of our changeful conditions in this life, of the revival of faiths lost for ages, and of a multitude of evidences are to us so conclusive, that we

cannot for a moment distrust what, with all its miraculous circumstances and its almost improbability, yet naturalness, appeals so simply to us and accords so sympathetically with all we believed of God, our Creator and Redeemer. That Christ the first-born among many brethren did rise, a first-fruits of the general resurrection, and that He takes the fear of death from before our eyes, we have not the shadow of a doubt.

"Jesus lives! no longer now,
Can thy terrors, death, appal us,
Jesus lives! by this we know
Thou, O grave, can'st not enthral us."

Our lives can now be lived in peace, there can be no break and end of our being. The good we do will live after us, and though our bodies, no longer of service, may moulder in the grave, we shall not die, but live. Death is a very avenue, guarding the way of life, the way that leads to God. Is it not? Sometimes we have mourned for an apparently untimely death,—for a promising life cut short,—for a friend removed. Weeping has endured for the

night, but joy came in the morning. When God's Sun of Righteousness arose, then we understood the end of it, and knew that—

"He is too wise to err,
Too good to be unkind."

The land beyond is no longer a terra incognita, though no navigator has explored and reduced its shores to a chart, and none has returned to describe its clime, and wood, and verdant field. The land is a "land of the leal," and we fear not to go to a home of the loval-hearted. The land is the Court of God, and we know assuredly that there justice will be done. a home of the pure, and free, and kingly; and we are willing when our time shall come to launch the frail bark of our hopes, even upon the turbid, surging waves of death; for our Pilot knows no shipwrecks, and the shores of the Heaven-land are never littered with the product of a destructive storm.

"Jesus lives! henceforth is death
But the gate of life immortal.
This shall calm our trembling breath,
When we pass its gloomy portal."

The lesson of life through death is this. Our life is not temporal, but eternal. We have not to pass through the experience of this life, and then be no more seen for ever, but to "know the number of our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

How limited are our lives, when bounded on the one side by the moment of infancy, and on the other by the tomb! And yet, how many Christians do so limit their lives. We exalt this life as though our scope for work was so great in the Here, that this, and the preparation for it, should be made out "the principal thing," and that heaven is a place for endless pleasure, when we have tired ourselves out here. As the Indian looks upon the hereafter as a happy hunting ground, where he shall chase his quarry, and never know weariness, so we picture an endless round of joys, in which work and thought are allowed small place.

Now what is the Reality, according to our faith in a Risen Christ? Does it not place this life in the position of a kind of elementary

school, in which the eyes of pupils are barely opened, their hearts just taught to beat, their minds just trained to exert themselves, when the call to work out and develope what they learned at school, comes to lead them into the high joy of service? Here we just learn to depend upon a living God, to believe in a living Christ, to stagger tremblingly forward, to look confidingly upward, when the door of a higher life and service summons us to be "absent in body, but present in the Lord," serving ever in His presence yonder!

Oh! what a vista it is which opens to our enraptured gaze! Try and imagine it, children! Think of it carefully, young people. You have a future before you which you will try to be worthy of. Have high ambitions. As the wise scholar carefully masters his work, and the principles of the sciences, so try you to make the most of yourself, become as strong as you can in all ways, do all you can; for exercise hardens the mind as well as the muscles of the body. Then the time may come when men

will persuade you that you have climbed the tree to the very top. You will be advised that you have done well in life, and can rest and enjoy yourself for many a day. As the clever husbandman thought that good farming had earned him indulgence, you may pull down barns and build greater, and say to your soul, "I have much goods laid up for many years." Don't stop here; but remember that if you succeed, you have only just made yourself fit for the Master's service. He is speaking to you; do not refuse to listen. God likes men to get on by honest work, for honest work makes men able more to do His work. And God says to that man who has got on, Son, Servant, well done, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things, be thou ruler over more cities!

By His sacrifice and the power of His glorious resurrection Christ claims you. All that you have become or done, He has enabled you and girded you and prepared you for. You are *His!* You are *bought* with a *price*.

"Jesus lives! for us He died;
Then, alone to Jesus living,
Pure in heart may we abide,
Glory to our Saviour giving."

With the heaven of heavens open to us by His Resurrection we dare not be unfruitful, we dare not come short of His glory, we are ashamed to neglect His so great salvation.

But can we? How little we can do as individuals! How insignificant can be our efforts and how barren their results! "The good we would we do not, for evil is present with us!" However are we going to get through safely and honorably? We cannot. "But what is impossible with man is possible with God." We may promise upon our knees in the morning that we will be true to God, and feel then as though nothing can tear us from the Saviour's guardian care; and yet a very little matter tempts to sin, and when we are barely conscious of it we have in our minds broken the law of God in many ways.

Now there is nothing to help us here but the

hand of God. Christ told His disciples it was better for Him to die and rise again for their sakes, and it is better for us; for now He has the keys of all the kingdom, and there is no evil habit we cannot overcome, no sinful desire we cannot put from us, no evil tendency we cannot resist by the grace of Him that "liveth and was dead," who "is alive for evermore." "Amen," that emphatic Hebrew "Verily" means much here. It is the solemn asseveration of all that has gone before. Do not let us then doubt Christ's power to help us, saying, "How can he assist us in our many and peculiar difficulties?" This is not a question for us to settle. Let us ask Him, in faith believing, and He will in His own, the best way.

"Jesus lives! our hearts know well,
Nought from us His love shall sever,
Life nor death, nor powers of Hell,
Fear us from His keeping ever."

For to Him is given a throne greater than that of David, and the Father hath committed all things into His hands. The power of His

messengers of help is that of legions of angels, and His authority is supreme in all the affairs of men. Wonderful are the answers His saints have had to their prayers. Women have received their dead raised to life again," and others have been tortured, not accepting deliverance, seeing Him that was invisible to the unillumined eye. Prayers have saved the endangered from his peril, the sinner from the end and wages of his iniquity, have brought back the wanderer, and have cast out demons of hate and malice and all uncleanness. For God sitteth on high above all circumstance and human arrangement. He who is our Friend is supreme in power, and very ready to give to all who ask of Him "in faith nothing doubting."

Can you imagine an earthly parent possessing such power to bless His children's labour as the Almighty has to help His, and declining or neglecting to hear their petition? Can you doubt that one of ourselves who heard the cry of any child in trouble would hasten to its relief? Why then doubt God? Will He not

with His Son freely give us all things? Will He not support the hands lifted up in witness for Him? Will He not come into the fiery furnace to encourage *us*? Will He not shut the mouths of lions for *us*? And when our scholar's service is accomplished here, will He not take us to Himself?

"Jesus lives! to Him the throne
Over all the world is given,
May we go where He is gone,
Rest and reign with Him in heaven.
Alleluia."

SERMON XI.

H Glorious Inberitance.

(Ascension.)

I JOHN, III., 2.

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is."

Ascension of the Risen Christ, how He came with them as far as Bethany, and in the act of blessing them was taken from them, and ascended to heaven. The recorder also reports how the disciples, bereft on earth of their Leader, bowed down and worshipped, and then "returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the Temple, praising and blessing God." How had come the great change from the moment of their desertion, and

of their repeated determinations to pursue the ordinary callings of their lives, to this wonderful exultation and faith when they knew they had lost their human Leader in the person of Christ?

After the crucifixion of their Teacher, and especially in those sweet and blessed interviews they had with Him after His great resurrection, they began to realize more and more the perfect scheme of salvation. When they had seen their Head bow in submission before not only the High Priest and Herod, but also the representative of a foreign power who in the Jewish view was an intruder on Jewish soil, they were led most clearly to see that His kingdom was not of this world, and that by no carnal conflict was His reign to be assured. On the other hand, after everything had been done that could be devised to seal up the dead Christ, He had appeared to them on many occasions, shewing that the carnal power had no dominion over Him, and was incapacitated from putting out the light of His teaching, and from preventing the ultimate triumph of His

Word. And when these new and inspiring truths were brought home to them, He, as He had told them He would, left them to deserve and receive the meed of their faithful labour, and ascended, before their eyes, to His Father and theirs. Another demonstration was thus given of His Divine nature and origin, and it is not at all remarkable that they should worship and rejoice in the public places to which serious and pious people did most resort.

From being disciples of Jesus they are promoted to be sons of God; and the distant heaven and heaven of heavens are brought nigh unto them by the passing of their Master behind the veil. He had laid down His life to take it up again: He now ascends from the mortality of this life, with all its restrictions and finitude, to the land of spirits, shewing that the hope of the hereafter life is changed from hope to light to all who believe on Him.

We have often felt the unseen land to be very near, when, in the moment of our bereavement, we seem to hear the flutter of angels' wings in the death chamber, and even in God's Acre the heavens have opened, and, 'mid our tears, we have seen the rainbow promise very really fulfilled. We come and meditate by the grassy mound because we have an idea that there the spirits of our friends are closer to us, and heaven much brighter than in other places.

And at the Ascension we realize that heaven is not a distant place to which the good may go some day, but that it is near and awaits our entrance, when we have returned home from the school of life, ready to help the Father, and to glory in His grand work of grace.

"There is a blessed Home
Beyond this land of woe,
Where trials never come,
Nor tears of sorrow flow;
Where faith is lost in sight,
And patient hope is crown'd,
And everlasting light
Its glory throws around."

Let us next notice the future which was revealed to the disciples up to the time of

Ascension. They begun their following of Jesus with very well defined ideas as to the nature, bounds, and place of the Messiah's kingdom. When they reached the Temple with praise of God upon their lips, and great joy in their hearts, all this certainty of assurance had melted into nothingness; and a new Messiah, a spiritual dominion and world-wide empire, had taken its place. Now, all was not bound up for them in the extent to which Jesus satisfied their old ideal, but all empire and service must be made to accord with Jesus. Their ambition was no longer the place of honour, but the place where they could best serve and imitate Him. The world without Christ was now empty, while poverty with Jesus was great reward. For the old faith had as its Ultima Thule, the empire of the Jewish nation, and as its highest prize a princeship of that people; while the new Creed had a universe for empire, and God for a Father. They were passed verily from death unto life, for now were they sons of God, and heirs according to promise.

They were prepared to leave the form of heaven, and that, too, of the church, to His hand. Do we not often puzzle our heads to no purpose as to the topographical conditions and political economy of the hereafter land? Is it not enough for us that there the disciple will, in a higher sense, be as his Lord, that as He is, so shall we be? All these fruitless speculations but obscure the glory of the focus of light about the throne. If Christians were here prepared to subdue all things to the nature of the Christ, and less anxious to tinker the church to bring it into accord with modern and passing whim and fancy, methinks the influence of the church would be greater, and the happiness of her members more complete. "These sayings of His," that life of His, those miracles of His. the sweet promises of His Spirit,—surely these are more of value and of inspiration than all the touches of intrigue or promise, or picture, that the most fertile imagination can dream of for us. It was for this reason that God sent forth His Son, born of woman, to embrace us with His wondrous personality, and draw our spirits after Him to the unknown blessedness of the unseen land.

"There is a land of peace,
Good angels know it well;
Glad songs that never cease
Within its portals swell;
Around its glorious throne
Ten thousand saints adore,
Christ with the Father One
And Spirit evermore."

And when these men returned to Jerusalem, what was their object? They worshipped and praised and witnessed because they could not help it; but what was their object in life? Fisherman, or custom house officer, or physician, what was each going to do for the Kingdom which he now knew was over all? They could not tell until God revealed it to them; and so they waited upon God, and prepared for His fuller revelation. But the inspiration of their life was a desire to live with and for Christ, to learn more of Him, and to "see Him as He is." They knew that "He

had many things to say unto them" which they "could not bear" yet. They recognised the fact that they still only saw "as through a glass darkly;" they wanted to "see Him face to face;" to "know as they were known." And therefore, from step to step, they were led out of the gloom, until they "spoke as they believed," and "waxed very valiant in fight, putting to flight the armies of the aliens." What a simple confiding faith was their's, what a watching for the appearing of the Angel of Revelation. Only to know Christ! Only to be ready when the Bridegroom came! And yet from this simple faith, and this one rule of life, sprang the faith of Christendom which has changed the face of the world as by a miracle. We often try to hurry the progress of the "Gospel Chariot," or to hasten its end by avoiding conflict with wrong, or seeking the aid of external influences. The Israelites tried this plan. They spared the Gibeonites, and left many fenced cities of the enemy unassailed, undemolished; and these cities and their after

influences drove the people into captivity, time after time, and led the Lord's Israel to the worship of false gods, and the evils which always follow the adoption of sensual religions. Brethren. God has not left us the labour of overseeing and planning the work of His vinevard. He does that, and it is not for us, who know so little of the ultimate designs of the Deity, to say He has acted, or will act, unwisely. We have only to be "as servants who wait for the coming of the King, that at His coming we may serve Him as He shall direct. Kingdom is a kingdom, and not a republic in the ordinary sense. It is a loving despotism, but a despotic government nevertheless. It is for us to obey, to watch, to pray; for to Him belongs the prerogative of design, even in regard to the minute detail of government.

Our whole nature should then reach forward toward Him, should expand at the light of His countenance, and should be ready to translate faith in action, so soon as the still voice of His spirit shall reveal His will.

- "O joy, all joys beyond,
 To see the Lamb who died,
 And count each sacred wound
 In hands, and feet, and side;
 To give to Him the praise
 Of every triumph won
 And sing through endless days
 The great things He hath done.
- "Look up, ye saints of God,
 Nor fear to tread below
 The path your Saviour trod
 Of daily toil and woe;
 Wait but a little while
 In uncomplaining love,
 His own most gracious smile
 Shall welcome you above."

"For now are ye sons of God . . . when He shall appear we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is."

SERMON XII.

"A Breath of Theavenly Presence!"

(Whit Sunday.)

John, XVI., 7.

"If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you."

HEN the Lord Jesus Christ was telling His disciples of His approaching withdrawal from their company on earth, a great sorrow fell upon them. They tried to point out to Him how great would be their misfortune did He so leave them with His earth work uncompleted; and it was in order to re-assure them that He addressed them in the words of our text. They knew not yet the nature of His work: they could not see beyond the limited horizon of their own experience. He could do this, and, although their eyes were still to be fixed upon that they could see, He

appeals to their faith in Him, and in His Truth and Wisdom. They still were crushed by their disappointment, and understood not the full meaning of His communication; but their despair was removed, and a little light penetrated through the thick darkness of their minds. Peter after this denied his Lord,—but with after repentance and a sore heart and tears. They all forsook Him and fled at the betrayal; but all save Judas hung together, and could not but discourse about Him, as they went to Emmaus or elsewhere; and there is something very significant of a lingering trust, in the fact that small knots of disciples were so soon discovered when the Easter Miracle was first revealed to the poor women who came to offer the last honours to a Beloved Friend and Master

After the Ascension their faith in Christ was fully restored, and for joy, and in sympathy with the purpose of Jesus, they could not keep silent even when in the mixed congregation of the Temple. And at last continuing in prayer

at Jerusalem, that Pentecostal shower of power fell upon a faithful band who were assembled waiting for the gift of the Holy Spirit.

> "Our blest Redeemer e'er He breathed His tender last farewell, A Guide, a Comforter bequeathed, With us to dwell."

And now those to whom He had promised the gift, and those whom their faith in His promise, strengthened in their confident expectation by the glorious Ascension of their Lord to the throne of God, had interested in the subject, assembled together with one accord in one place; and while they were waiting the place was filled with the presence of the Highest, and the Spirit of Christ filled their hearts with its grand inspiration, and their mouths with a flood of confident words.

Outside, the Galileans and Pilate's body guard still were at daggers drawn, the priests and Sanhedrim were still endeavouring to cast discredit upon the persistent rumours of a risen Nazarene, of a form having been seen like His with his disciples one day, as they drew up their boat upon the beach, of a new confidence having been apparent among the erst downcast followers of this Crucified One, of the definite statements in public places that the Christ had been seen by His party taken up into Heaven. And the atheist shrugged his shoulders and joked of the contest, and the soldier laughed at the hot arguments which all parties waged as to the merits of the story. And in the midst of it all, God opened the mouth of Peter the impulsive and declared His purpose, and the Paraclete,—the Encourager was come.

Do not let us think that there was a public display of power before the Jews, any more than there is at the present day when God is changing men's hearts, and filling His church with devout worshippers. "The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation." Wherever the longing soul waits for God, the Spirit descends, and his workfellow often knows not how near God has come.

"He came sweet influence to impart,
A gracious willing guest,
While He can find one humble heart
Wherein to rest."

Even in that great assembly there were some not ready, who said, "these men are not sober," and they went away without receiving the Spirit.

Probably most of those who had come together were converted to the faith of Jesus before. They, like His more immediate disciples, had been staggered by the shock of His death; but the influence of the eleven, and of the faithful women, had won them back and convinced them of their error. The same chastening influence had affected all; and the sayings and personality of Christ were fast displacing their former theories of His Object in coming to mankind. And as the solemn prayers—many of them doubtless they had heard often in the synagogue in His presence —were earnestly offered, and as the Scriptures relating to the Son of God were read by one

of their number, a new spirit fell upon them, and old things faded out of view.

Had Christ remained, this heart-searching, this scripture-reading, this earnest soul-inspired prayer, had doubtless not prepared the way for the descent of the Spirit. But in the extremity of their loneliness they turned pure eyes of expectation toward God; and God answered. They could no longer be guided by the formal words of Jesus, or influenced by His personal presence. They, therefore, by His absence were drawn after Him and received the Comforter to their souls' salvation.

We often wonder why God for no purpose of punishment deprives us of means of happiness and peace. With no warning He comes and takes the lamb of the flock, or the adviser, or bread-winner of the home, from our family circle when all seems to point to this as to something arbitrary, or without reasonable explanation. Again our prosperity becomes, like Job's, a desolation; and our joy of harvest is blighted by an unseasonable gale. Again,

some affliction fall upon our body and we are sick, though not conscious that we have broken any of His laws of health.

Brethren, God is never arbitrary; and when He sees we are clinging to a loosening hold, He removes it, when trusting to a dangerous foundation, He takes it away, when setting our affections upon things that perish, He hides those objects of our love until we are better able to understand the duty we owe to Him and to ourselves. Terribly severe are some of His judgments, but not so hard as the wages of sin. His wounds cause often sharp stings of pain; but that is better than the stupor of deadly disease. In tender love and with a true parent's pity, he uses the surgeon's knife, that, cutting away the dangerous member, He may preserve us from future or present evil.

The Holy Spirit is given to supply the lack of man. How efficacious it is we may see from the "fruits of the Spirit." How differently we live under the dominion of the Spirit! That which we could not regard without feelings of repulsion, the spirit shows to be the way of life and peace.

A sinful life becoming filled with the Spirit of God developes a power, greater for God than even there had previously been against Him. As the 'possessed whom chains could not bind' came to sit at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind, so the disciples, whom contact with the Master barely kept from quarrelling among themselves on receipt of God's witness in the Holy Ghost, became humble learners, self-devoting, burden-bearers for the weak, and not a few of them poured out their blood for Christendom as martyrs appealing to a pagan world. How His chastening spirit subdued the impetuosity of St. Peter, and the Pride of Sect of St. Paul; and how ready all the apostles were to deny themselves of every even allowable pleasure, in order that others might be guarded or guided by a less briary path to the high way of knowledge. And what a change is noted in the lives of Christian men and women, when, inspired by

the spirit of God, they are able to look up and say, "Abba, Father."

The spirit of Christ enables men who possess the power of resisting to submit, as Christ did, to many indignities, and gives them grace to decline apparently simpler methods which are carnal, in order that they may do God's work in God's own way.

"And His that gentle voice we hear,
Soft as the breath of even,
That checks each fault, that calms each fear,
And speaks of heaven.

"And every virtue we possess,
And every conquest won,
And every thought of holiness—
Are His alone."

Yes, the spirit is that breath of life by which God's people are trained to work, moved to speak and to do whatever is needed to make straight the highway for the King's progress. Its limitations are found only in the bounds of the loyal Christian's power. It fills us, inspires us, and lights us from on high. It is in reality heaven in the earth-life, God in humanity,

and the assertion of immortality in mortal lives.

The spirit is everywhere operative. In all the apparently insignificant routine work of life, in Him we live and move and have our being. From being hopeless drudges, or money grubbing business men, we become diligent in spirit serving the Lord. There is an eternal end to the unwarranted distinction between secular and spiritual. All is spirit and all is life. It is for this reason that churchmen are so anxious that in so called secular schools such teaching in regard to the spiritual life may be given as shall permeate the life and character of the unmatured child, and not only underlying, but taking all possession, may teach his fingers to fight and his hands to war in the great struggle which always characterizes the endeavour of a business man. Once we can instil into the child mind this influence, the gates of hell shall not prevail against his after-witness. The great demand of a secular world is for our inspiration, which like power in a factory, shall

fill with a brightness which is *not* a quality of matter all things God created for our use. In our foreign and domestic affairs, we need to recognize the claims and prerogative of the spirit, or our cast-iron decrees and our rigid but dead machinery will fail to win the world from darkness and pain into His marvellous light. Oh, that the church would see this, and pray more earnestly for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in all the common affairs of life!

A formal acceptance of Christ's promise of the Paraclete, and a weekly assembly for worship, or even a daily kneeling at His footstool cannot meet the case. He must be with us in our counting-house, and field labour, in our domestic councils, and our public work, in our grief and in our joy, if we would fully benefit by the gift of the Spirit.

"Spirit of purity and peace,
Our weakness pitying see;
O make our hearts Thy dwelling place,
And worthy Thee."

SERMON XIII.

"The All Sufficient!"

(Trinity.)

REV. IV., 7.

"Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which was and is, and is to come."

THE Church of Christ has ever been jealous of the personal attributes of the objects of her worship, and wisely, for did we not assert the Triune nature of God we are aware that there is no resting-place between the Catholic and the Mahomedan platforms. Either Jesus is God, or He is merely an official of God; and the Holy Ghost is either God, or only an influence proceeding from God.

If Jesus be not God, then He has deceived both Himself and His Church; and if the Paraclete be not God, then the Apostolic groundwork is an unreliable foundation, both for doctrine and for morals.

On the authority of One who knew all things and yet knew no sin, we believe that there is in the Divine Being a Trinity, and we worship and praise Him, world without end. And yet the doctrine of the Trinity, in spite of all that profound theologians of all ages have done, cannot be so formulated that a full and explicit explanation may be given to satisfy all men; and this simply for the reason that it relates to that realm of knowledge of which we know but little, -and that only "in part." Nor is it necessary for our faith that we should so explain the Trinity. Christ has told us so much of His relation to the Father and of His Authority in the world and in the Church, as is required to justify our confidence in Him. And He has further comforted us by the Promise and Reality of a Paraclete, or Holy Breath, emanating from the Father, and representing that work He has done on earth, and more.

We worship therefore the One in Three under His various Names and Beings, with the certainty of hope, knowing that though we pray to the Father, the Son, or the Holy Ghost, we pray at the same moment to the Triune God. We can leave the explication of the mystery to the time when we shall know many things which now perplex us, but do not disturb our Faith.

We worship the Father Almighty; that is, the Almighty as Father, because from Him comes all that makes life possible and worth living.

Do we ever think what we owe to the Father. Too often we look upon adoration of God as a duty,—even as a penance, the neglect of which will involve our everlasting loss. What do we see, that so limited should be our understanding? Are we blind, that we behold nothing of the wondrous providence, the great re-creative force, which supplies our need and delights our eye with the manifold revelation of Nature? The fathers of our race could trace the Creator-

Redeemer in the rolling hills, the burning volcano, the heaving ocean swell, the keen ice storm, the waving blossom on a myriad of trees and bushes, the hole of the coney, the gentle lily, the scorching sand, the cooling rain, the bursting spring, and the star-spangled canopy of heaven. Where are our thoughts, that even apart from His scheme of salvation, we are unable to glorify God in the ascription of mercy, of unsearchable wisdom, and omnipotent helpfulness? Has our nearest friend done more for us than He? Or has our most favourable circumstance more prepared our happiness than His gracious providence? See how good God is to Israel, and the Living Lord to all who would make the most of their opportunity! "Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness." "All Thy paths drop fatness" for the 'lean and hungry soul'! Where is there a God like Jehovah? Where a Friend like Him who made man after His own image, and so loved him, after he, like a prodigal, had left the fold of the safe home

life, that He gave "His only begotten Son" to save him from the disease of his sin and its consequent wages—death.

"Three in One and One in Three, Ruler of the earth and sea, Hear us while we lift to Thee Holy Chant and Praise."

And is the Son of God not deserving of adoration? Is He *only* a means of salvation through faith in "His Name?"

In fulness of time He came to give sight to the blind, to illumine afresh the obscured view, and to point us by Himself the new and living Way to the Truth that maketh free the children of God.

With the coming of our Great Exemplar the old message was translated into a simpler tongue. The Old Dispensation is permeated by an atmosphere of "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not." The flaming Sinai guards the dangerous road, and Prosperity, with all its kindred allurements, point onward. With Christ a Gospel long needed was preached,

and to the ever-recurring plea for gods to go before us, He answers, "Follow Me," "What I do, do thou," "Take up thy cross and come after Me," "I am the Light of the World;" come near to Me, that I may enter with the Father and reign in thy heart.

Under the ancient system of Theocracy, men were apt to regard their most favoured fellows as the favourites of God. Under the new, the Light shone forth from the midnight blackness and shame of Calvary, from the rebuff and repulse of the Sacred College of the Sanhedrim, from the desolation of the solitary place, and from the persecution of His own kindred.

And on *Golgotha* a light was set up, which nor kings, nor principalities, nor powers, could ever extinguish—the light which testified, in living deed and word, to God's estimate of man, and to His determination to save man from the evil accretions of ages' growth.

And in this Light men began to be ashamed of idleness and selfishness, and commenced to do as Christ taught them to do. They became disenamoured of Cain's plea of irresponsibility; and all over the earth you now find men who have left their homes, and denied themselves earthly rank and comfort, because they see in distant lands room for the lifted Cross, and hear in savage anarchy an inarticulate cry for the gentle rule of Christ, and in our own land, how many there are who in hospital, or workhouse infirmary, or slum, or some other place, meet a great need that, through the Love of Christ, pleads for their love to satisfy.

"Light of lights! with morning shine;
Lift on us Thy Light Divine;
And let Charity benign
Breath on us Balm."

O Thou Son of God, Thou art Holy God Almighty, worthy our praise and deserving our service. Help us to serve!

And is the Holy Spirit not worthy of adoration? That Being Divine which gives us the nerve to live, the impulse heavenward, and the wisdom to use in the winning of Christ's Own back to the Lord. Can we deny to Him

Divine honours? What has not the Spirit of the Lord already accomplished in the field! Who filled the mouth of the martyr with food, which was an antidote to Death? Who changed the hearts of those wolfish men and women and children who demanded "the Christians to the lions"? Who made men ashamed of those feeble crutches—the temple of the Jews and the shrine of the "unknown god"? Who was it dissuaded our own English ancestors from those wicked displays of physical prowess which treated men as mere "beasts of war?" and who prompted them to enterprise and noblest heroism? Was it not the Holy Ghost? Who soothes the unrestful pillow of sick humanity with counsels of peace and comfort of resignation? Who throws oil upon the troubled waters of debate, and chastens the soul of the bigot? Who stirs men from vain and fruitless jangling, to active work and Christian union against the forces which make for disintegration and hateful schism in the ranks of the Lord's disciples? Who opens the door of the future,

and encourages us to the pioneer work, and to the waiting, and to the sowing of precious seed? Is it not the Holy Spirit? And this Spirit is as potent now as ever, and deserves our warmest welcome as an impelling influence, as when, during Herod's persecution, He scattered the brethren through all the cities of Syria preaching the Gospel. In troubled seas of trial and opposition, it is He who calms our souls with sweet comfort; and when at the close of the day or the life we are dissatisfied with our work, and, like the prophet of old, complain that there are none likeminded with us in whole hearted service, He draws the veil, and shews us the harvest of apparent failure, a crop of healthy green shoots springing up, perhaps many of them the fruit of the very efforts we were so ashamed of.

> "Light of Light, when falls the even, Let it close on sin forgiven; Fold us in the peace of Heaven, Shed a Holy Calm."

"Three in One and One in Three, Dimly here we worship Thee; With the Saints hereafter we Hope to bear the Palm."

Then shall we join, with all the mists cleared away and the doubtful points made plain, in the chorus of those who bow down in their hearts crying inwardly:—

"Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which was and is, and is to come."

SERMON XIV.

"The Garments Washed in Blood."

(All Saints.)

REV. VII.

"And one of the Elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they."

THESE are a part of the vision of St. John which he had in Patmos and are a question asked by one of his guides in the spirit world so clearly laid bare to his faithful, but sorely tried affection. While he is regarding the heavenly hosts, he notes a multitude which no man could number, of all nations and peoples and tongues, having every personal peculiarity of variety and yet all free, all *standing* in the Divine presence, all sounding aloud His praises all earnestly and intently offering worship and service to the King of Truth, while he heard the

Angels answer their song with the loud Amen, an elder appeals to him as to the meaning of this mighty multitude, and forthwith proceeds to explain the wonder.

What an education this revelation must have been to St. John. He had seen the angelic bodies before, and the angels and archangels which surround his Throne. He had heard a song divine and inspiring sung to the sweet tones of the celestial harps; but now he hears the confident ode of the victorious earth child, and the languages he had heard in the eastern cities; and he recognises that Man has a place already among the Hosts above, and that the place of Humanity in God's Kingdom is distinguished and glorious.

He had come from the world where men spoke in doubting terms even of Hades, and with misgiving as to the ascension of Man to the Spirit Land. Now he sees man ascended and busied in active service. The now, to them, has become the hereafter, and in the power of the Lion of Judah they have prevailed to open

the Book of Life. Such was the picture to St. John; such the encouragement he received.

"Could we but stand were Moses stood
And view the Landscape o'er,
Not Jordan's Stream, nor Death's cold flood
Could fright us from the shore."

Brethren we can. Not every day nor for every man does God draw away the curtain which hides that thundering chorus of saved Men and Women: but sufficiently he lets the far off rolling resonance salute our doubting souls with peace and hope. When we feel dubious as to whether life is really worth living, an elder asks us to look up and tell

"Who are these like stars appearing,
These, before God's Throne who stand,
Each a golden crown is wearing,
Who are all this glorious band.
Alleluia, hark! they sing,
Praising loud their heavenly King.

"Who are these in dazzling brightness,
Clothed in God's own righteousness,
These whose robes of purest whiteness,
Shall their lustre still possess
Still untouched by time's rude hand?
Whence came all this glorious band?"

Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Who stand in His holy place? They that hath clean hands and a pure heart . . . "These are they who come out of great tribulation with a pure eye, and firm hearts. These are they who insisted, many of them through the loss of nearly every earthly joy, that the way of the Lord, the *simple* way was the King's Highway to Peace.

Now, it is hard to pursue this simple child's path to God. Expedients and policies and false Christs without number tell us that the end of Christianity may be reached with less waste by other ways than by a consistent adhesion to the plan of the Saviour Himself. Very plausible are the emissaries of Egypt and Edom and the merchants of Tyre! Yea! if it were possible they would deceive the very elect. And the elect would be deceived and lose heart, could they not see "the saints above how bright their joys," and be nerved by the rumble of many voices and many nations to belief, even against seeming failure in the Way of the Lord.

The young especially are likely to miss the inspiration of this revelation. It is hard for them to believe in the existence of a Divine Order, of a limitation of the method of salvation, of a restriction of the ambitions of carnal man. All nature is rosy with the promise of success upon *any* lines adopted, and the heavens are often as a nebulous something which need only take form in the future shadow. An earthly standard usurps the place and influence of a heavenly, and the tangible treasure of this life hides the precious pearls of the Eternal.

My friends, the way of crosses is to be found in the field of license, and the hour of irreverence and unfaith is the beginning of the day of death and despair and fear. Heaven's host of our human brethren does not contain the millions who have shrunk from the discipline of faith and the labour of the spiritual contest with the forces of evil. The victors are men whose voices have acquired a manly cadence while raising the loud alleluia in Armageddon, and whose faith in God has been the result of

co-operation with the King upon the untilled wilderness of man's godlessness and pessimism.

"These are they who have contended
For their Saviour's honour long.
Wrestling on till life was ended
Following not the sinful throng.
These who well the fight sustained
Triumph by the Lamb have gained."

And there is a something so full of sympathy to St. John and to all whose faith is chastened by pain in the words of our context. These "have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb."

In the heat of conflict pain is often never felt. A soldier will sometimes become giddy through loss of blood before he feels himself seriously wounded. But all cannot be in the exciting struggle for mastery. Most men and women have to bear pains without the incentive of a conflict, vigorous and blood-stirring. They have to believe without any banner to quicken their hopes save the banner of awful Calvary, and the only crown they seem likely to win is the crown of thorns, the only sceptre the mock-

sceptre of a reed. St. John himself was a man of this kind. Not called to the schools for contention, but to carry love to the destitute and bankrupt human nature, the fathers give many indications of a heart tried but tenacious, of a hope blighted often, but never made ashamed. And St. John saw men of this kind in that mighty company, and women too-the mother-martyrs of obscure homes, the childmartyrs who before the gleaming fangs of the horrid wild beast, calmly looked up to the open heaven, the man-martyr, who, helpless, impotent yet faithful, lay bound while wrong rioted in excesses and right was publicly beshamed. God does not judge men by the result of their work, but by their obedience of faith; otherwise many a martyr would be refused admission among the saved. The widow's two mites were to Him more than the abundance of the wealthy. And many a man and woman and child is found among God's saints who has only given two mites—all a living. Only tears, only agony, only pleas, only privation, for the

Kingdom's sake, only an example, only a look!

"These are they whose hearts are riven
Sore with woe and anxious tried,
Who in prayer full oft have striven
With the God they glorified.
Now their painful conflict o'er
God has bid them weep no more."

And lastly, my brethren, is there not in the vision of St. John and in the comforting word of the elder an added incentive to Christian endeavour here? Is there no paracletic inspiration in the knowledge that "our labour is not in vain in the Lord?" The burdened man of business looks forward with joyful anticipation to the rest of competency; and the anxious husbandman is nerved to the toil of cultivation by the thought of Harvest Home. Are not we encouraged to trust on, fight on and suffer on when we think of the joys prepared for those who diligently seek and serve Him who has for our final elevation yielded up His only begotten Son?

For only by constant application and persistent

self-surrender upon the altar of duty can we be prepared for the enjoyment of God in the fulness of His spirit.

As blooming and the growth of seed vessels ever precede the last effort of seed shedding, so earth labour for God, and earth fruiting in the spirit alone can be the precursors of that full joy of the heavenly work and service of praise. Our eyes must be prepared by the dawn for the dazzling noon-day glare, and our spirits by spring and summer for the trying season of harvest. Let us then meet, as in the light of heaven, those obstacles we so often encounter. and in the name of Him who cannot lie prevail. And with the example of the blessed saints ever before us, and their assured beatification real to our consciousness, let us "lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us "looking (off) to Jesus the Author and Finisher of our Faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the Cross, despising the shame and is set down at the right hand of

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God." Many have not "resisted unto Blood," and are discouraged at every little distraction, and stricken down by every small affliction. Unlike Job, we are sometimes in the moment of our agony ready to "curse God and die." Brethren, let us consider the saints whose example destroyed the power of paganism, nerved the manhood of nations, won civil and religious liberty by the shedding of their blood, and who were saved by enduring to the end.

> "These the Almighty contemplating Did as priests before Him stand, Soul and body always waiting Day and night at His command. Now in God's most holy place Blest they stand before His face."

SERMON XV.

"Entering upon Life!"

(Baptism.)

S. John III., 16.

"He shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."

To baptise is to cleanse primarily, by washing from impurity, from the accretions of evil, from the taint of sin engendered or inherited. By this rite we do not simply shadow beforehand a future conversion and a future sanctification; we believe that in effective baptism the God to whom we present ourselves or our children will, and does wash us from our iniquity and take away the sin of the world. For this reason it is that the Church is so anxious to increase the number of the baptized, and to fill the new members in Christ Jesus with those thoughts, those ambitions, and those

ideals which result in a grand devotion and in a noble consecration of life and powers to the service of the Church of the Holy Saviour.

The Jew who was baptized into the doctrine of a new Teacher signified that, by that washing, he left behind him all other ideals, all other doctrines, and all other desires, in order to place himself in what he now considered the truer fold, the more holy association and the more helpful service.

And it was in this spirit that the various constituent classes of Jewish Society came to St. John the Baptist; and for this purpose that they left following John, to attend the teaching of Jesus, as soon as ever their first Teacher shewed them the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.

By baptism, their past was thus left behind, and *actively*, *vigorously*, and in measure, enthusiastically, they reached forward to the newer hope, to the brighter life, and to the more needful activities.

And it is just this same spirit that is found in

the true disciple, in the really baptized member of Jesus Christ. Baptism is not a rite only: it is a step forward and upward. It is more than this; for it is by Baptism that open confession of religion is made, and the subject by this service dares to assert his allegiance to the Church of the Lord.

"In token that thou shalt not fear, Christ crucified to own, We print the Cross upon thee here, And stamp thee His alone."

Like the recruit who takes the "Queen's Shilling," we commit ourselves,—not to noisy acclamation, nor alone to an academical agreement with the theory of the Evangel, but to drill and discipline, to temperance and consistency, to hardship and fast, to wounds and grief, and lastly to all those labours and experiences without which we can never join the Angel legions in their attribute of praise, and can never hope to stand beneath the shot-riven banner of the Victor Anointed, stained with blood.

Whether then as little infants, quite unconscious of the momentous act of the lovers of our souls who bring us to the font, or as of riper years able and ready to see in the Crucified, "the beautiful among ten thousand and the altogether lovely," we regard the rite, and the sacrament, and the service of Baptism as an experience which absolutely separates us from the Gentile outsider, and marks us out as "holy unto the Lord." The imprinted Cross implies not only a separation, but an opposition to "the world, the flesh, and the Devil, "which means a persecution and tribulation of our carnal nature, but to our spirit-life a "power of God" for salvation, for healing, for building, and for production. Baptism is the assertion then, not only of our own right to serve God with a good conscience without reference to the permissive powers of the world, but it is a Declaration of War against the state of evil and of destructiveness which so mars the beauty of creation, and so impedes the process of the Divine Restoration of fallen man.

And this open and *obtrusive* confession does not readily come from weakness like ours. It is very hard for us to stand, in such a small troop, with such apparently inferior weapons, and defy the Champion of the armies of the Philistines! The laugh of the hoarse-voiced Gittite, and the chaff of his buffoons and jesters are bad to endure. As Saul retired sullen into his tent after each defiance of Israel, so we shrink from doing more than shake out each day the folds of the heavy banner.

This is not what Baptism means. God comes to us with a sling and a few pebbles which we can use well enough for our own pleasure, and says, "Go out against the brazen Philistine," or He sends with loaves and a few other necessaries the youthful David to the camp. How are we, Baptized and Sponsors of the Baptized, answering God's purpose? How many godparents realise what their solemn undertaking at the font involves in responsibility? How many even think it needful to prepare the minds of the young subjects of

Baptism for the coming day of Confirmation? The little ones for whom you answered years ago in Baptism are God's talents, potent in a rich and energetic life—if trained and wisely prepared for Christian work! How is it that so many have *hidden* these talents away, have neglected their spiritual improvement, and perhaps by want of sympathy, or by evil and inconsistent example, have contributed in making a faithful heart faint, an innocent heart suspicious, and a warm heart irresponsive to the call of the Gentle Jesus?

The Brahmin is not ashamed of his caste marks upon his frontal, and the Moslem is not afraid to prostrate himself in prayer before a myriad of amused English soldiers. How is it that we let the marks of the Lord Jesus die away from our foreheads, and from the face of those for whom we have undertaken that we will guide and help and encourage them in their heavenward way? The Baptismal cross is

"In token that thou shalt not blush To glory in His name." Yes, this is the victory, even the victory of our faith. How is it, then, that we are so reticent in the world, and so reserved as to our Spiritual citizenship, and as to our claims on Christ's behalf, even among our most intimate friends? Baptism involves an outside allegiance, a vigorous foreign policy, a 'light in the window,' a banner upon the house top; there must be no lights hidden, no secret hoard of mercy, no sentimental indulgence of religion underground. For this it is that

"We blazon here upon thy front

His glory and His shame,
In token that thou shalt not flinch

Christ's quarrel to maintain,
But 'neath His banner manfully

Firm at thy post remain."

Either the Christian religion is the conquering force before which all opposition will ultimately go down, or Christians live in a 'fool's paradise,' where joy is but a tickling of the imagination, and hope is a mirage which excites anticipation but to be shame and deceive the soul. That the Christian Faith inspires man to victory, and

builds what nothing can pull down or destroy, the history of every generation demonstrates. Why then need we be afraid to fight upon the side which not only deserves to win, but does and will always win?

"'Neath His Banner manfully, Firm at thy post remain."

And Baptism is the assertion of each succeeding generation that in Jesus Christ and in His Holy Spirit whereby we are sealed into the Day of Redemption, there is the completion of Man's Nature, the fulfilling of his destiny. what a constant witness this has been? gaol at Phillipi, in the household of Cæsar, in the galleries of the Catacombs, by the Ethiopian's Chariot on the Egyptian highway, in richly beautiful Cathedral, in lonely cotter's earthern-floored home, under the spreading palms of the southern seas, in the Cabin of some storm-tossed bark in mid-Atlantic, in King's Courts, and in the prison house of shame, the holy water has been cast, and the cross has been printed, in token of the confidence of the

Church in the promises of her Divine Head and in the grand sufficiency of the Christian Life. The simple words of dedication, the simple form of separation, the simple charge, the simple rite, survive all internal and external struggles and attacks. We believe and therefore we come and bring our babes to enter upon the trying life which yet is life—life Immortal. Life cannot exist without hope; and Baptism is the exultancy of our hope in Jesus. And in this sacrament is God. Amid the shadows of the Cross, as we indicate its imminence in the service of Baptism, God becomes indwelling, Christ takes the tender lambs in His arms and to the tremulous parents, recognises His responsibility and His sweet, loving desire for their Spiritual Victory! Born from above, with added impetus, the soul of innocence reaches upward. Woe unto him who shall cause one of these little ones to offend!

"In token that thou too shalt tread

The path He travelled by,

Endure the cross, despise the shame,

And sit thee down on high; Thus outwardly and visibly We seal thee for His own."

Oh! the pity of a life's failure, of the blighting of hopes, of the waste of opportunity, of the shortcoming in a race well started. The joy of the final leap of the victor past the winning post! What can compare with a crown won and deserved! Oh, that the Baptism may fill our life with truer confidence with a capacity for nobler and prevailing endurance, and with a consciousness that, step by step, or even inch by inch, we are distancing the pursuing tempter, and nearing the goal!

"And may the brow that wears His Cross Hereafter share His Crown."

SERMON XVI.

"The Confirmed Covenant."

(Confirmation).

JOHN XVI., 7.

"Now they have known that all things, whatsoever Thou hast given me, are of Thee."

THE disciples were filled with dismay by the rapid succession of events which they had noted in the last few days. Since Christ had "steadfastly set His face towards Jerusalem," every step foretold triumph and pain strangely blended. The Cross and Calvary, surrounded by thick clouds, portended the sufferings He had so often foretold; and this cross all felt Him more threatened with, for every word predicted the travail that was before Him. But high above this looming sadness the angels bore palms of victory, and prepared the glad triumphal car for Resurrection Day.

And the very victim rather displayed might in surrender than the frailty of the helpless. "These things I tell you," said He, "before they come to pass, that ye may know that I am He." Bonds and death awaited Him, because He had all things mundane in subjection, and Himself lay down His life. Life for evermore were His, for the everlasting Sceptre had not departed from Judah, nor a Law-giver from between His feet.

But the disciples were not fully prepared to submit to this Divine ruling as yet. He had set them apart,—had chosen them out of the world for His purpose of world-healing; but they would in a few hours be offended, and flee from the officers who would arrest their Master!

He prayed for them.

They scarcely yet perceived to what an extent the prayer was needed. Very confident were some of them, for they had not yet been hounded from city to city through His name.

To-day there are those here who have taken

upon them vows, and received a blessing as disciples of Christ. Under the inspiration of present conditions and teaching, they are apt to undervalue the guidance they so much need. They will go away from the classes, and from this helpful service with the best of intentions to cling to their God, to follow His Christ, and to bear witness that they have received in measure of the Holy Ghost. They are inflated by a passion of exultation in God's holy church, and filled with a desire to serve their day and generation. And so far they act well.

But to-morrow a reaction may come, and perplexity puzzle, and temptation try them very hardly, and the path of God be presented full of briars and pitfalls, and strewn with wrecks of former pilgrims; and then how shall it fare with the young member of Christ?

One tempter will tell us we are going on very well, and need fear no snare or fall, another will advise us to trouble not to keep our feet, for it of no use our keeping ourselves from the polluting influence of our fellows, and of our other surroundings. Another, again, will inform us that the ancient way is rough and uneven, and much inferior in every way to the path through the pleasant fields of indolence; and yet a fourth will try to entangle us in our conceit, or to trip us up by the snare of our haughty pride.

My young friends, the ancient way was trod by the Man of Nazareth, and no disciple ever met Him in the path of indolence. All the other temptations assailed Him in the Wilderness of Judæa, and attacked His position in vain. If you would be His followers, His learners, you must keep near Him, wherever He leads, whatever He teaches. The disciple must be near his Master, or he soon loses his Master's power, and grace and nature.

"O Jesus I have promised,
To serve thee to the end,
Be thou for ever near me,
My Master and My Friend;
I shall not fear the battle
If thou art by my side,

Nor wander from the highway If Thou will be my Guide."

With or without a present Saviour we are always near the world. Out of our animal nature spring foes with talons sharp and powerful. Amid the most fertile pastures the vulture eye watches the straggling sheep, ready to pounce upon him the moment he becomes too weak to escape. The carnal mind, too, easily tempts us to seek temptation, and is almost overwhelming when temptation is upon us. No gifts, no education, no mental powers, no circumstances can preserve us from these downward tendencies of our nature, unless they are founded in the ever-near Christ. In business, in the very home life, in the world of letters, everywhere, we are exposed to a thousand degrading doctrines, a thousand debasing influences. "To whom shall we look for succour, save to Thee, O God."

"O let me feel Thee near me:
The world is ever near;
I see the sights that dazzle,
The tempting sounds I hear.

My foes are ever near me,
Around me, and within;
But, Jesus, draw me nearer,
And shield my soul from sin."

These disciples believed in God, but did not associate all good things with Him, any more than we do. We, like them, look upon the Great King as upon a Divine Vengeance, or Divine Anger, whom we must pacify, but cannot love. Christ came to reveal the true Father-King; and I think He does it in the words of our text. He wanted His followers to understand that God was the "Father, and Giver of all good gifts." He wants you, my brethren, and sisters, so to believe. God is a jealous God, but no tyrant; He is a just God, but merciful, tender, and provident. The nearer we get to Almighty God, the closer to the side of Jesus,—and the more earth's Babels are disregarded, and earth's jealousies condemned.

Men cry out for the "open vision," and long for revealed gods to guide them. They tell us

"the Bible is archaic in form and antiquated in Theology, that creeds must anew be formulated, a new gospel be proclaimed to mankind." The fault of non-revelation is not with God, and the Holy Word shall never become antiquated until eternal truth is obsolete. Come to the House of Prayer to meet God and commune with Him, and, Verily, thou shalt find a blessing. The words of ancient prophets shall daily be found taking richer volume and tone until man's blindness shall wholly pass away. Let no earthly carelessness stand between thee and the Communion of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Bread of Life to all believers shall indeed yield sustenance, and minister strength, and going into affairs and interests of this world, let us hourly converse with Him.

"O let me hear Thee speaking
In accents clear and still,
Above the storms of passion,
The murmurs of self-will.
O speak to re-assure me,
To hasten, or control;

O speak and make me listen, Thou Guardian of my soul."

And then, my dear people, let us think what duties our separation to God's service really involves. If all good comes from the Father of Lights, then we ought to seek to fulfil our Destiny in the work of the Church in the World.

God has promised the faithful disciple that He will not only provide us with ability and talents, but that He will also open out spheres in which they may have exercise.

Some of you are called to learn and serve in the Sunday Schools, some to stand for righteousness in commerce, others to help in the training and care of younger brothers and sisters. Some, again, are still preparing themselves for the battle of life in schools of learning, and others are in various other ways elected for the service of the Church. Remember your Confirmation vows, and neglect not to avail yourselves of every opportunity of increasing the effectiveness of Church influence, and the power

you have to speak and live the truth of our great Head. You have now formally enlisted under Immanuel's banner; let it not be a mere form, but wave high the Standard of Faith wherever you have opportunity.

"O Jesus, Thou hast promised,
To all who follow Thee,
That where Thou art in glory
There shall Thy servant be.
And, Jesus, I have promised
To serve Thee to the end;
O give me grace to follow,
My Master and my Friend."

"O let me see Thy footmarks,
And in them plant my own.
My hope to follow duly
Is in Thy strength alone.
"O guide me, call me, draw me,
Uphold me to the end;
And then in heaven receive me,
My Saviour and My Friend."

He that is faithful in a few things will be faithful also in many. As we are found able to learn, He calls into power to teach. And as in the marks of Jesus we plant *our* feet, we see the

sights which filled Him with joy, awful joy, as He went up to the feast; and by His power, and for His glory, and in His grace and faith we become worthy to sit down with God and the Lamb in glory.

SERMON XVII.

"Unith the Master."

(Holy Communion).

Ps. CXLIII., 9.

"Deliver me, O Lord, from mine enemies. I flee unto Thee to hide me."

In the midst of great soul tumult these words are used. "Hear me speedily," cries the Psalmist, "my Spirit faileth." His enemies defeated his plans, his foes gathered daily courage at the sight of his dreadful straits, his own troops and he himself were reduced to a forlorn hope. Surely this is the meaning of the Psalm. And as the forlorn hope is not usually manned by reckless desperadoes, but by the giants of faith and trust, so the trouble of the Psalmist compelled him to trust God mightily in this extreme effort. Humanly shut in, and without issue or supplies, like the

Prophet at Dothan, his keen sense of mind quickened his ears to the hearing of the chariots of help in the mountain. You all have heard the story of how in Lucknow, when the savage hordes of blood-steeped insurgents were counting the days for the hunger fiend to finish his fell work, the sore need of one poor woman reached over an otherwise impossible distance, and heard the strains of the band of deliverance and the tramp of the armed men coming to relieve them. Just in this way God uses our heaviest burden, our almost despair, our terrible anguish, our deep humiliation, to fill our soul with delight and urge us to the necessary effort for freedom.

It is remarkable how hardened wretches in their abject misery will cry unto God. Men who have only blasphemed His name when all went well, in the moment of tempest, in the shaking of the earth, in the climax of social iniquity, are found crying for mercy with mighty agonies, and appealing confidently, though sometimes profanely, to the Almighty

goodness. The condemned prisoner, who has no remorseful sorrow for his crime, who cares not for the victim's ultimely end, nor for the grief and poverty of his family, is yet heard to plead upon the scaffold for mercy as the pains of death get hold upon him. Much more the saint who has ever loved and feared his Maker; for with him it is only the utmost call of direst need, and is the assertion of a determination never to let the Saviour go until the ultimate blessing is vouchsafed. "Deliver me, O Lord, from mine enemies." O, how many they are! Foes within and foes everwhere. Even our religious exercises cannot keep them altogether away. There was of old a common belief that no spell, no evil spirit could withstand the Sign of the Cross. Even this, however, is disproved during every celebration of Divine worship. Often we delight rather in the rolling, pealing, swelling anthem than in the God to whom these are offered as very unworthy gifts. Again, jealousies and angry words are indulged here, and a low ideal of service is engendered by the

the indolence of our minds and spirits. And yet the Holy Rood with its Divine Victim are even before us, and the sacred Name is ever uttered with outward signs of respect or reverence. We can never escape this or the other deadly foe so long as we trust in our own power and in our own means of Salvation. Even he who never meets his fellow in the madding din of social or business pursuits, perhaps most earnestly cries out, "Who shall save me from the body of this death."

"They who fain would serve Him best are conscious most of wrong within."

Have you never felt it so? Have you never realised how strong are the bonds of iniquity when you make the most vigorous effort to shake yourself free? There is no hope for man save in the Salvation of the precious blood of Jesus Christ our Lord. Only by His heavenly washing can we ever become "Whiter than snow." And, as we come to Him in His own Feast of Love, as we open our eyes to the grandeur and majesty of His passion, as we

hear again and again the sacred words with which He encourages His disciples to fight the good fight of faith, we feel a wondrous ecstatic influence pervade our nature, the burden falls from our shoulders, and thence into the fountain opened for all kinds of sin and uncleanliness.

"Jesus, Lover of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly,
While the gathering waters roll,
While the tempest still is high;
Hide me, O, my Saviour, hide,
Till the storm of life be past;
Safe into the haven guide,
O receive my soul at last."

And for us who believe "Jesus only" is the soul's refrain to every spiritual song. He is the Captain of our Salvation, the Bishop of our souls, the Beautiful among ten thousand, the altogether Lovely. Yea, He is Jesus, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever: the Founder, Head, and End of all church life, the Alpha and Omega. This Sacrament of Holy Communion in then consequently a centre of our

Church experience; for here we meet most closely the Lord we love and adore. When the Holy Feast is despised and allowed to fall into the background, it is a certain sign that the people have ceased to value the contemplation of the Incarnate Word, suffering and triumphant in opening the gate of the golden city to man. And yet in Christ is all our hope—in Him alone can we become holy in the sight of God, or able to serve our Father in the daily witness of life.

"Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee,
Leave, ah, leave me not alone,
Still support and comfort me.
All my trust on Thee is stay'd,
All my help from Thee I bring,
Cover my defenceless head
With the shadow of Thy wing."

Coming to Jesus, however, does not mean only fleeing from the wrath to come. This flight may arise from a refined selfishness, and the true Christian cannot be selfish. Communion with Christ is not only a protection from the result of sin, but is a washing away of sin itself from the nature.

"Plenteous grace with Thee is found, Grace to cleanse from all my sin."

And sin is not an act or a series of acts, but a condition. Sin begets disobedience, outrage, weepings without cause, anger and darkness; but none of these are sin itself so much as they are the product of sin. By no overt act need we break a single commandment: and yet be in sin and the slave of sin too. Sin is in the heart, a rebellion against God's law, a suspicion of His love, an anarchy of carnal-minded feeling. When we commune with Him at this Holy Table, when we offer a consecrated sacrifice, heartful and spiritual, in His presence, we enter into a clearer light, a larger room, and learn to know God too well and to value our Holy Redeemer too highly, to so readily rebel against His Authority. And as we grow in grace, we become more willing to increase the rate of our development. Earthly calculations and safeguards are discredited, and we pray,

"Let the healing streams abound, Make and keep me pure within."

"We flee to Him to hide us," and that He may hide us in His love. My brother, my sister, have you reached even to this? If so, you know how sweet is the ever-growing faith in your Saviour. To know in Whom we have believed, and to find that the more we get to know Him, the less we think we find flaws in His Divine Character is joy to which nothing on earth is equal. In all the other relations of life, while we may continue to love and in a measure respect our friends, after we have become thoroughly familiar with their lives, and thoughts, we cannot find 'a perfect man,' nor behold 'an upright' in the truest sense. But with Christ, the more we know, the brighter the vision, the more real the experience, the more enthusiasts we become.

> "Thou of life the fountain art, Freely let me take of Thee."

There is no fear to the true Communicant. And our holy children go through the fiery furnace of trial and persecution, and our devoted members take up the hardest pioneer work in the most unpromising soil all over the world, and our sons are found fighting a gallant battle against every attack upon Christ's Church and every attempt to hinder her work and insult her Lord. And bearing His reproach, covered with a glory the world cannot see, nor understand, the servants of the Cross wave defiance against the gross Philistinism of modern or middle-age blunders, not doubting that God will in His own time "arise and scatter His enemies."

Most of this trust, most of this fervour of this high patriotism, was born before the Altar sprang into form in the meditation upon the the dying victory, the burial of the Resurrection germ, the seed sowing for the mighty tree which should fill the whole earth with its spreading branches.

Let your prayer, as you kneel now and ever in the presence of the Crucified Conqueror, be:

[&]quot;Spring Thou up within my heart, Rise to all Eternity."

SERMON XVIII.

"belp meets and meet belps."

(Marriage.)

Eccles. IV., 12.

"And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him, and a threefold cord is not quickly broken."

It is remarkable to note the unanimity of all races, all nations, all classes of society, of whatever religion, of whatever disposition of mind, upon the marriage question; as though the Divine Institutor had provided co-lateral evidence of the necessity for marriage, whether as a social custom or as a union of persons. The practice varies much according to local surroundings, conditions of life, and a nation's tendency and disposition; but even the African kinglet and the Turkish pasha, and still less developed humanity, appear all to recognize its necessity, and to fulfil more or less the

requirements of the relation. And the slighter the marriage bond, the more unstable is society; and the more unequal the yoke fellows, the less vigorous the national life.

As the Creator has produced certain conditions in which true marriage is impossible to some, and has even called others who naturally are capable of marriage to be separated for special reasons from the way of matrimony, it is evident that marriage is not intended to be ordained for all. Indeed it is manifest to all that injudicious, merely animal marriage, lies at the root of much of the unhappiness and poverty of the nation. Before ever the matter is broached as a possibility, it is incumbent upon all concerned that they be convinced that all the duties of the high and mysterious office are within the reach of the couple who would be joined as man and wife together.

Marriage is first for the two contracting parties. If either is unable to strengthen the other, if one is only able to hang as a wearing dead-weight upon the industry of the other, if, in either case, there is any incurable temperament, any mental taint, any ineradicable bitterness as to the truth of what the other accepts as essential in life, the union can not be true marriage. The more closely they are bound together, the more will these points of difference be magnified and new 'bones of contention' discovered. Too often man and maid are drawn to each other by mere passing circumstances, only to find that with differing surroundings and in new paths the affinity is not real. Nothing can be more wretched than the awakening of either to impassable gulfs which must ever separate, and voids in one or the other which cannot be filled. Lives which are promising and helpful apart are often ruined by this unnatural bond. But where the two are well mated, joined together in the true sense by God, seeing eye to eye, and each helping according to ability vouchsafed, every day cements the union, each trial draws them closer, and for better for worse, they are "able to withstand" the enemy.

"The voice that breathed o'er Eden,
It hath not passed away,
Still in the pure espousal
Of Christian man and maid,
The Holy Three are with us,
The Threefold grace is said."

Marriage is also a State matter, and God depends upon our spiritual ascendancy in purifying the vicious channel along which so many lives run. The Apostle S. Paul even on one occasion strongly advised celibacy for Christian members. It was in the hour of persecution, and a nerve was called for which might be lacking were there too many families dependent upon the martyr's confession. Christianity purifies, refines all the higher feelings of humanity, and inculcates a chivalry which would never snatch pleasure at the expense of others, weaker and more liable to suffering.

True patriotism would prevent men marrying whose marriage would fill the workhouse, the lunatic asylum, the hospital, or in any way of a certainty make the burden of the poor heavier.

But patriotism goes farther. It has an ideal

which exalts marriage to such a position of honour and responsibility that all life is a double endeavour to become what the union makes possible, as by help meets and workers in and out of the home.

A wife who has this ideal does not permit discomfort to reign when her bread-winner returns tired from his labour. A husband with the same aim endeavours to leave all worry and all shadow outside the threshold when he comes home. On the other hand, the most regular and most earnest of the Church's workers are the *ideal* husband and wife. How many excuse themselves from every civic, parochial, or Church duty, with the time-dishonoured word, "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come!"

A man ought to be in a better position to sympathise with and help his fellows when he has a complement in his mate. Alas! the number of young men who teach in our schools, or study in our Bible classes, or help *twice* a day in our choirs, who first become slack in

well doing, and then yield themselves up to indolent habits, and drift away from the Church, in the service of which they found so much delight.

> "O spread Thy pure wing o'er them, Let no ill power find place, When onward to Thine Altar The hallowed path they trace."

There is such a danger in the hour of happiness of saying like the disciples of old, "It is good for us to be here," "Let us make tents." And God would answer as the disciples were answered, "This is My Beloved Son, hear Him!"—Gifts do but train the Receiver; and by taking at the hands of God we bind ourselves by an everlasting covenant to use His creatures, and not abuse them.

But in the marriage mystery there is a third party. The Creator spirit alone can join that He has created; and He always joins the Christian man and woman to Himself. Here, then, is the threefold cord. There are difficulties which arise that even united husband and wife are unable to overcome. Here God steps in, and "all things are possible to him that believeth." In our hymn we pray God, verbally, and say—-

"Be present Holy Spirit,

To bless them as they kneel,

As Thou for Christ, the Bridegroom,

The heavenly spouse dost seal."

Do we realise how ready the Holy Ghost is to unite with them in the holy comfort? In our wedding-feast we hope the blessing of the Almighty will rest upon them. But really when the happy yet sorrowful tear falls upon the loving mother's shoulder, and the last cheerful word is shouted after the departing couple, the Unseen, the Stronger goes with them, and it is His voice which fills the pure hearts with ecstasy, and His hand which clasps closer the hands just pledged. And it is just this spiritual aspect of marriage which is so frequently referred to in St. Paul's epistles, and in the Book of Revelation. And wisely; for only as the Spirit does guide and inspire the

life of the mated ones, can the world become better for their marriage.

Christians must elevate and magnify the office of marriage by unifying their force in improving the tone of society. And this can not be done by any conventional prudery or veneer of modesty and morality. It can only result from a wholesome life and a soul chaste and good. "The king's daughter is all beautiful within." Not that which entereth in defileth a man, but that which cometh out! From within are the germs of a death that is the more dangerous because its very existence is unsuspected. The man who never thinks guile or frames iniquity in his heart will never speak vileness nor corrupt the morals of society. The woman who is not only faithful to the trust of her husband, but is faithful and pure and chaste in her love for God, will never be thought lightly of. The carnal mind will sink ashamed in her presence, and men and women round her will learn to know what manner of manhood Jesus came to inculcate when they are no longer weak vessels,

no longer indolent men and women, no longer ignorant, hard-hearted, and bitter husbands and wives.

Then they may still further exalt their office, when God shall bless their union with increase. Parents who will look upon all offspring as additional trust on God's part are not likely to fall far short of their higher duties.

When the Creator gives children to the home, He gives another chance to the parents, humbled by their experience, another opportunity for us to live our lives over again under improved conditions.

We often say "If I had known when I was younger, what a different life I would have led!" God gives us the power to live this life over and over again as he adds one shoot after another, offspring from the parent stock. He expects us to live better in our children than we lived in ourselves! We have some knowledge of the snares of this world. Let us keep the trusting feet from their vicinity. We remember the first and holy influence of the prayer at

the mother's knee. We must deepen the impressions made there upon us. We can call to mind how our life was preserved from weakness by the contemplation of the strong character of our parents. Oh, that our consistency and firmness in faith might keep the feet of our darlings! Many a growing child has clung to the Bible for years simply because his mother and father believed in it, and has become strong in obedience to its wisdom. Let no laxity of view interfere with the faith of the child in that most trying time of transition. And how many fresh little lives have been lost to the church through their parents neglecting to educate them for the holy witness of the confirmation. May no sad second failure ever fall upon us. May our life in our children seize all advantage and glorify God.

And, finally, my brethren, there is the fruition of a true marriage in the home eternal. They learn first in all the conditions of life to come, O God—

"To cast their crowns before Thee
In perfect sacrifice;
Till in the home of gladness
With Christ's own bride they rise."

As the silver crown unfeared takes the crown of golden youth, the light within is golden, all covered with the pearls of holy deeds and chaste life. And on the highway of the life past nothing is clear to us but the mile-stones, the stones of help, of the Father's love. But ahead there is one blaze of light. Amid and with angels and archangels and all the company of the heavenly host, our glad and solemn acclaim is of honour to the Lamb that was slain, to Him who has been so helpful to us, in whom we trust so implicitly, our Heavenly love, the Bridegroom of the Church.

SERMON XIX.

"Mot lost, but out of sight!"

S. John XIV., 2.

"In my Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you."

THIS is a part of the parting counsel of Christ to His disciples, when the time was nigh in which He should lay down His life for man. For long they had clung to the idea of an earthly crown, and even at the very last there were some who hoped that by some stroke of power He would assert the sovereignty of the Jewish nation; but gradually He disabused their minds of this rabbinical phantasy, and helped them to peer beyond the veil and see the unspeakable, and note the saints above—how bright their joys, how sweet their communion with their God.

And now, as time pressed heavily, and the final trial of their faith was imminent, He told them much that they yet could not understand, of the unseen world, of the future of the soul, of the ultimate of the Church, of the nature of the bond of faith.

And He commences His description of Heaven by demanding a faith in *Himself as the very essential* to their understanding of it. Ye believe in God, believe also in *Me*. In my father's house are many mansions.

They were soon to have their hearts disturbed; events were crowding fast upon each other already, and Golgotha was in near view. Whatever they did, they must believe in the Eternal Truth of Jesus. There was a future life, a future dwelling, a future rest.

And is not this just the comfort we need so often in our life. And the thought, nay, certainty that Heaven is not an image of the fancy, but a blessed verity, has not only taken away the sting of this world's pain for us, but when we have laid the remains of our dear ones in

God's Acre, our tears and sobs have lost their bitterness. They have become the gentle rain of the spring time, sparkling with the promise of Immortality.

"We sorrow not as those without hope for them that die in the Lord."

And all mankind, of every Religion and race, however isolated portions of the human race may be, have believed at some time in the eternal life, and in the reward of the virtuous. And the heaven has been a refined earth, and the reward the victory over conditions, and the hope the utmost of humanly imagined good. The Indian has a hunting ground where the chase and victory are never interrupted; the Hindoo a higher state of life, and the Saxon a hall of victory. The heaven of the Christian follows upon the same lines; but as the Christian religion has higher ideals, it gives a more glorious heaven. As it knows no perfection save God, its heavenly gaol has no finality save in the Almighty. Through all the metaphor so dear to the Hebrew mind we see this distinctly,

and the ideal of S. John answers to the promise of Christ Himself. We believe and are sure that as Christ ascended, the firstborn of many brethren, so we must ascend to be "for ever with the Lord."

"Christ will gather in His own
To the place where He is gone,
Where their heart and treasure lie,
Where our life is hid on high."

And that the home prepared yonder is anything but the most joyous and perfect we cannot believe. He is gone to prepare rest for us. There is something wonderfully significant in the fact that as Son of Man He is gone to prepare this for us. We may be confident that seeing we have this Son of Man for our High Priest, whatever Heaven may be, it will have all the elements which go to make up human spiritual enjoyment, and conduce to spiritual growth and work.

Here we are hindered by sickness, pain, poverty, and unsympathetic circumstance, and ensnared by the most insidious temptations.

There shall be no more death, no more pain, no more of anything that hurts or destroys or endangers health. There will not only be no hindrance, no fetter; but every encouragement the Father's love can devise, every light He can shed upon our way. The soul taken to Heaven is simply removed to a more favourable part of God's garden, that, like the pure lily, it may grow there and beam upon the Father of Lights. The good we do lives on here; the good we are we plant up yonder, and it never dies there.

"There is a land of pure delight,
Where saints immortal reign,
Infinite day excludes the night,
And pleasures banish pain.
There everlasting spring abides,
And never withering flowers;
Death, like a narrow stream, divides
This heavenly land from ours."

And yet we shrink at death's alarms, and are dismayed when the great Father calls His children home to their rest.

[&]quot;Day by day the voice saith come, Enter thine Eternal Home,

Asking not if we can spare
This dear soul it summons there.
Had He asked us, well we know,
We should cry 'O, spare this blow!'
Yea, with streaming eyes would pray,
'Lord, we love him, let him stay.'"

And yet we must all die; and each in his turn must be laid to sleep in the narrow grave. We know our time will come, and perhaps some would anticipate it, did they dare. But most would still plead for more grace, for more of the visible before they took the great plunge into the deep unseen. "Spare me a little that I may recover my strength before I go hence and be no more seen," we beseech, although we have, or profess to have, confidence in the Great Shepherd. To-day we are dull and sad in the privation by death, but even while we bow our heads in grief the birds hop from twig to twig, and the sun will not be hid, and the grass grows, and the flowers of the graveyard yield their sweet perfumes. There are changes and decay to be found in Nature; but the change is the triumph of maturity, and the decay is the victory over the tomb, for in the withered stalk is the falling of the resurrection seed into the responsive and fruitful earth. So in His infinite wisdom the Creator redeems man from destruction, and saith "Return, ye children of men." Learn of God's open book of Nature—how Spring on Autumn's fall shall tread, and how from seeming weakness shall awake the mighty strength of the new-born joy which shall arise from the ashes of despair. The heaven is prepared for those who love God and are fit for His Kingdom; is it not well that He should call them away from the trouble they were so ill fitted to endure?

Many a parent who has mourned deeply for the loss of the childish touch, the lisping voice, the unceasing patter of footsteps now still, has in the agony of a life struggle blessed God Who took her from the evil to come; and could we but extend this same thought we should find that, whatever we once thought of Him, we know now He is

[&]quot;Too wise to err, too good to be unkind."

". . . The Lord doth nought amiss, And, since He hath ordered this, We have nought to do but still Rest in silence on His will."

Even as, though the pain of the family at Bethany was agony to Jesus that wrung a tear from Him as He went to the sepulchre, He resisted the temptation to relieve it otherwise than at the right time, so now, for our good and that of the dear ones gone before, He keeps the door of the tomb fast closed, and fills the habitant of Heaven with joy unknown on earth, though in our self-absorption we do not trust His love.

In the Catacombs of Rome we have countless evidences that in all ages the Christian ideal of the tomb has inspired the living with confidence, and prepared the dead for the life that has no end. While heathen parents cursed the gods for the ruined prospect, and emblems like that of a broken column pictured their despair of ever seeing again the deceased, Christian epitaphs indicated the comfort of the Spirit, the

hope of the hereafter, and the faith in God, while the joy of a certain resurrection brightens the Galleries as formed in every imaginable form, hinted or expressed according to the exigencies of the time. "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain," says Paul, as he was ready to be offered up. And this is really the Christian view.

There is also another thought which robs the grave of its victory and makes it the way of joy. Through the grave we join again all broken chains, leaving associations of pain behind us. How many friendships interrupted, how many friends separated by adverse suspicions here will be clear as daylight to all in the Land of the Leal. No more tangled skeins, no more calumny, no more undeserved shame and reproach, no more mischief and wrong, no more weeping and wailing and death and despair and darkness of soul. All shall there be clear and simple and manifest. The light of God shall shine right through us and bring into prominence the worth and strength and also

the feeble part of us and the need of the soul. There will be none to take advantage, but each will be the complement of his fellow, and the lack of each the richer soul will supply.

We, most of us, have friends who cause us sad and serious thoughts here. Perhaps yonder their mysteries shall be simplified to our wonder and joy. And the troubles we have as to the dealings of God with us—how these perplex us at times, and how impossible it seems to reconcile two phases of the Father's nature! Brethren, what a joy it will be to us when that which sense hides is revealed, and the whole and perfect supersedes the partial and incomplete! How glad shall we be when the dark lines of the way of pilgrimage is seen golden and glistening with Divine glory! And this is just what Heaven will become to us. The fears and misgiving and doubts and misunderstandings of God will have an end for ever, and we shall know Him as He is, and however He shall appear we shall be like Him.

How hard are rock and steep to climb, stream

and fordless river to cross, when we take to the mountains. How they become as very little things, while we look round upon the distant horizon, broken with peaks and hung with cloud curtains. Our sense of proportion is lost, as once we understood the term; and in a new world, upon the Holy Hill, with God for our guide, and the high Heaven far above us yet, the river is a streak of silver, and the rock we do not see at all. And out of the depths of our earth troubles He lifts us up until He sets our feet upon the Eternal Rock of Zion above.

"Many a heart no longer here,
Ah! was all too inly dear;
Yet, O Love, 'tis Thou dost call,
Thou wilt be our All in All."

SERMON XX.

"Our Life Building."

(Dedication).

I COR. III., 11.

"For other Foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

ST. PAUL here evidently intends, while discouraging all attempts at human Church Institution, yet to shew that providing the fundamental and essential conditions of Church doctrine and practice are observed, Christian life may take *many forms* and still be one, because of the necessary identity of the foundation of Christ's Church. No institution can exist in the air, and no influence can be involved without a Divine Principle, which is able to cope with the forces which make for man's downfall and death.

Many builders have been found in the Church, and various have many of them been

as to the manner of presentment of truth; and yet in the Church of the Redeemer there is room for all of them if only they be founded after the Divine Order, in a real conformity to the will of Christ. But without this Living Stone, this Divine Son, this great Mediator, nothing but schism and jealous burnings, and vain janglings and offences, can arise; and where the method and matter of doctrine depend for their authority upon any save Christ, there can be no solidarity, no unity, no history, no inspiration. Hence the Divine Order, or Divine manner of distinguishing His Church from unbelievers, must of necessity be very carefully sought out and adhered to by a body of men who are jealous for the influence and honour of their great Founder and Head. Not only does the Church in every age seek to preserve her doctrine whole and undefiled by strange teaching, but she, as a consequence of such preservation of doctrine, guards the sanctity of those sacraments which are the witnesses in her of the power of God unto salvation.

When any of these rites and services and means of grace have been neglected, spiritual indifference has speedily robbed the Church of her right and power to transmit from God to man the blessing and inspiration of life; her Churches have fallen into decay, her pulpit has degenerated, her altar has no longer a lesson for the weary worshipper, and the soul-stirring prayers which have brought the pious of all ages into close nearness to God have lost for man all but their chaste form. Only a Church founded upon the Word of God, committed to us in Christ by the Holy Apostles, can possibly be at rest within her own borders, or able to organize the conquest of the world outside.

There is at the present time a feeling of indolence, and another of political origin, which urges upon us the expediency of a union of all forces under one great Authority; and none more than the churchmen of our day know the impotence which results from any schism, any heresy, any division even in aim among Chris-

tians and men of good intent. But no re-union which is not based upon the Authority of Christ, no common Church which in one law that is least would disregard the Divine Order, no federation which, in one single particular would check free progress in assertion and evangelizing the world, can ever be accepted by Christians. Compromise with error can never be justifiable, and the Church had better be a doomed victim before a pagan Cæsar's chair, and still confess her Faith and her Founder, than buy prosperity and popularity at the expense of her ancient Faith. What Christ has founded for all time, no human hands must be allowed to remodel or modify, whatever be the present effect of our determination to be true. We must be faithful to Him, for if the Corner Stone be removed, wherein consists the Temple.

"The Church's One Foundation
Is Jesus Christ our Lord,
She is His new Creation
By Water and by Word;

From heaven He came and sought her
To be His holy Bride,
With His own blood He bought her,
And for her life He died."

Then the foundation of Christ provides, by His Order, a majestic bond of union among believers.

In God's Church, all mere accidental distinctions vanish away, and master and servant, high born and humble, learned and simple, young and old, are brethren and sisters in the Lord. How our hearts burn for the trials of Christian populations in the sore straits of persecution. Whether in Uganda or in China, or in Hindustan or in England, wherever a Christian is found to suffer for his faith in Christ, and his profession of membership in His Church, we are full of a rich and helpful sympathy; and when we find that legislation is needed to conserve the rights of religion, or to deliver the unwary from a deadly snare, it matters little what party we belong, or what earthly interest we represent; we all unite

against the menaced evil, and that because in common we enjoy the real fellowship of the Christian Faith. More than ever before, signs are manifest that all ranks and interests will be found discarding the party garbs and cries their fathers have found too feeble and unhelpful, and arraying themselves either for Christ or Antichrist.

"Elect from every nation,
Yet one o'er all the earth,
Her charter of salvation,
One Lord, One Faith, One Birth.
One Holy Name she blesses,
Partakes one Holy Food,
And to one hope she presses,
With every grace endued."

Ephraim and Judah shall no longer be at variance, nor shall jealousy divide the priest and the warrior, but both, under the banner of Israel, shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistine, and in Unity find the cherished ambition more than realized.

Not only shall she be united and in sympathy, but her union shall encourage the great hope of the true Catholic. We shall believe more that the kingdoms of this world shall become the Kingdoms of God's Son.

The time is not near, but is sure to come. Even now the sound of the chariot wheels of the Son of Man are heard in the air, but afar off. Nearer the babel of earth's voices, the din of carnal minded distraction, the jar of conflicting interests, the wail of the worse than fatherless, the cry of the desolate, and the moan of the wronged. The air of our slums is stifling with the stench of shameless iniquities, and reeking with the smoking embers of life's saddest failures. And men say, "Doth God know?" "Can the Lord of Sabaoth hear?"

Atheism hawks her nostrums, and false prophets cry aloud to deceive the credulous.

But among all this there is the soothing music of the voice of mercy, and the missionary, and the nursing sister, and the teacher, steal into the hearts of the world's outcasts, until hope breathes faith, and that blossoms into life again.

"Though with a scornful wonder,
Men see her sore opprest,
By schisms rent asunder,
By heresies distrest.
Yet Saints their watch are keeping,
Their cry goes up, 'How long?'
And soon the night of weeping
Shall be the morn of song.

"'Mid toil and tribulation,
And tumult of her war,
She waits the consummation
Of peace for evermore;
Till with the vision glorious,
Her longing eyes are blest,
And the great Church victorious
Shall be the Church at rest."

And the foundation of her life in Christ is secured to her by her union with Him in her present struggle.

There are often problems presented for her solution which can never be solved save by authority. And even the authority of eminent churchmen of every age is seen to be exposed to the possible fallibility to which even wisest men are liable. What are we to do in the

swelling of Jordan? Can the mighty and the wise deliver us then?

The young are often led to doubt by the lack of explicit statements of certain beliefs of the Church. Human nature always likes to have "gods to go before it." My younger brothers and sisters, here is the panacea which will cure all your disease of unfaith, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

Behind the Church and beneath her is the Unsearchable yet All-Sufficient; and when man, even at his best, fails you, God will, if you trust Him, make all plain.

Wisely He has left even the saints dependent upon Him for life and breath and all things, that the discipline of faith might bring us more into a truly spiritual relation with Himself.

And in this union with God we grow into His nature, in a more real resemblance to Him, and experience His mighty power in overcoming our vile tastes and our earthly desires and ambitions, until "old things," for us "are done away," and all are new—new in Christ. And thus the authority of Christ becomes to us as that of the nature which for a season had guided our inclination and prompted our desires. The law of Christ becomes the law of our hope,—our aspiration,—and by contact with Him we become separate from sin unto a life of righteousness. Here, my brethren, our fathers met with God, here we may meet Him too, and here we can receive the strength for the ordeal to which all are called.

As the Saints in Glory everlasting, we may be saved out of great tribulation, and be clothed in the purity of the blood-washed robes. Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. When we most learn our dependence upon Him, we most learn confidence in our eternal foundation. Jesus, the Lamb that was slain, ever lives to make an effective plea before the ever loving Father, and our Rock shall never be overturned.

In the hereafter is our Church's Eternal Hope, and for that life she lives the life that now is.

"Yet she on earth hath union
With God the Three in One,
And mystic sweet communion
With those whose rest is won.
O happy ones and holy!
Lord give us grace that we,
Like them the meek and lowly,
On high may dwell with Thee."

SERMON XXI.

"The future of the Seedling."

(Sunday School Festival).

ST. MARK X., 14.

"But when Jesus saw it, He was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of God."

HAT an Institution the Sunday School has been to the Church of God! In olden days there was no church work of this kind. The Sunday School is of comparatively modern origin, and even now is strangely altered in character and aim from its original intent. At first a very secular institution for teaching the very poor and very fallen families how to read and write, the Spirit of God has used it, first in improving the depraved and pauper population, and afterwards, when our

National School System had largely provided for this necessity, in opening up the Doctrine of Jesus Christ to the millions who otherwise would never hear His name. Here we can train the little ones of our homes to become useful men and women, and to learn to make stronger the bulwarks of our beloved country.

Once the work of the child was very much circumscribed by the prevailing customs of the age — which trusted in the converted adult rather than in the spiritually developed child, for much that little children do directly or indirectly.

And yet, in child-work is the hope of the wiser modern age. Far stronger is the Church which is made up of those who were never found wandering outside her boundaries, and who have learned to love her faith and order, than when consisting of fragments of all kinds, good or less good, who were held together often through fear, and oftener still were in little harness at all.

This being the case, it is surely wisest that

all churchmen should take the deepest interest in the spiritual education of the young, for the Sunday School should be to the Church what the Elementary School is to the College and University. As the School is careful to ground well the child, and inspire him with a love of learning, so the child will shine in the lecture hall and the examination, and later in the work of life.

And you, my dear children, should earnestly consider what your life is going to be, and prepare yourself for it by diligent study and self discipline. You do not learn for form's sake all the record of ancient days, nor the Collects and Catechisms of your Church, but for a great and Eternal purpose. In the woods there are tiny bushes as well as lofty trees, there are shoots with a few leaves on as well as thickets and heavy shrubs. All the trees were small and tender once; all the shrubs sprang from little seeds years ago. And you are, in the pursuit of your studies—both in Sunday and day school—only learning how to grow. Cut a

slip off a geranium, and stick it in the ground, and there is no budding and blooming and spreading *all at once*. The piece under ground has to learn *how to get roots*, which will convey moisture and such minerals as it needs for food; and all this takes time.

You cannot always have your fathers and mothers to help you, and lift you over your little difficulties; so they send you into the nurseries, there to learn to make root in knowledge and wisdom for yourselves. You can perhaps do very little yet, but you have faith and learn, you first imitate your parents and are kind-then your God, and become good and pure in your religion. You cannot understand all things at once, - your trust, your parents, your teachers, your priests, your Saviour. Faith you cannot do without. How do you know the multiplication table is right whatever the problem it is applied to? You do not know, but you believe your teachers, and try it, and your faith is rewarded. As children, you must believe many things in religion which

your Church has proved true, but which you cannot fully understand yet. And Christ loves such teachable little children. He likes the clasp of the little fingers which seize His hand, the crow of delight with which babes receive His embrace, the hosannah which rang through the Temple and streets of Jerusalem from childish lungs.

"Heavenly Father, send Thy blessing,
On Thy children gathered here,
May they all Thy name confessing
Be to Thee for ever dear;
May they be, like Joseph, loving,
Dutiful, and chaste, and pure,
And their faith, like David, proving
Steadfast unto death endure."

Sometimes when you read of great heroes of our race, grand teachers and inspirers of English life, you look upon them with awed admiration. When you hear of Cuthbert, of the Venerable Bede, of St. Aidan, and of great leaders of modern times, you revere and wish you could have known them. Christ wants you to know such men; but much more He longs for. He

calls you to be such men. The Hebrew children whom He blessed had heard of David, of Solomon, of Isaiah, of Joshua, of Moses. The blessing of Christ meant that the children might be ambitious safely, that it was God's good pleasure to give them the kingdom. He wants you to aim high, and to be useful to your fellows. Many are prophesying that the reign and power of the Church will soon be on the wane. So long as Christ is our Head, and so long as He can lead by means of children, all is safe for His Church. He wants your services in this direction, that, when one generation after another of good children have become good men and passed to the abode of the good, the world may at last be so good at heart that the prophet's word may then come true:-"The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."

You will not find it easy. Even after confirmation has become an added seal to your salvation, the evil that is present with you will often try to prevent you doing right. But it is

possible. You can do it if you live very near to Christ. You will get terribly tired of forgiving your enemies, for instance, sometimes. times, too, the duties of your business, and those of religion, will almost weary you. This is no new thing. You know S. Peter, after he had been over three years under Christ's teaching, denied Him, and on three occasions was called from his fishing to the fishing for men, and that he forsook Christ and fled, and shewed that it was not easy, this struggle with his evil tendencies. But it was St. Peter at last who opened the Kingdom to the Jews, and then to the Gentiles of Cornelius' household. It was hard for Saul of Tarsus to humble himself before Jesus of Nazareth, but it was Saul who, as Paul the Apostle, was chosen to assert the claims of Christ at Cæsar's Court, and died a martyr there. God helped these holy men, and He is willing to help you.

[&]quot;Holy Saviour, who in meakness, Did'st vouchsafe a child to be,

Guide their steps, and help their weakness,
Bless and make them like to Thee;
Bear Thy lambs, when they are weary,
In Thine arms and at Thy breast,
Through life's desert, dry and dreary,
Bring them to Thy heavenly rest."

And it is not only in this life that He is willing to be your Guide and your Joy. There will be many children in the choir about God's Throne. Jesus once said that the little ones' angels, were always before the face of the Father. And if we trust in God's Holy Spirit we can be very near to God. A prisoner, who had led a bad life, and to whom repentance was coming swift and trying, asked a little child to pray to God for him, for said he, "God will always listen to a child." And the man was not far wrong, according to the Bible. Children are very dear to God, and He loves to see them engaged in all good work.

Children have often comforted people in trouble as no one else could. Do not think then that it matters nothing what you do until you are grown up. God wants to use you now. And my dear people who are no longer children like these, beware how you offend one of these little ones. Your influence is great with them, do not let them grow up toward Christ without your hand's support, and your eye's encouragement. Some may know the wages of sin. Do not allow one of these to earn them. Some know the gift of God. Oh, that ye would more honour the Giver in the wise use of it. Much can be done by you to confirm the word of the teacher, to strengthen the impression created at the Sunday School. Let no opportunity escape of helping forward the work of the Church in these child lives. Earn God's well done. What an unspeakable bliss that will be when, as we all gather in families yonder, we find not a single child or parent missing. All passed from the Church Militant to the Church Triumphant above, to be with God for ever!

[&]quot;Spread Thy golden pinions o'er them, Holy Spirit from above,

Guide them, lead them, go before them,
Give them peace and joy and love.
Thy true temples, Holy Spirit,
May they with Thy glory shine,
And immortal bliss inherit,
And for evermore be Thine."

SERMON XXII.

"The Gospel Story."

(Children's).

JOHN III., 16.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

THIS is the first and cardinal point of difference between the theology of Christianity and its prophecy, the Jewish and Patriarchal faith, and the creed of Paganism. The love of God in Christ is opposed to the arbitrary deism of the various heathen systems.

The idol worshipper is the victim of fear; he dares not do anything to displease his god, because his god, he thinks, will punish severely the slightest neglect, and will pain him as much as it can for slights however unintended. And fear hardens and makes cruel in disposition,

relentless in revenge, and untrustworthy in character all who are devoted to the false religions of Paganism; while, on the other hand, the love of Christ makes tender, and dissolves out from all base alloy the heart of all who put their trust in God's mercy.

There is something enchanting in the story of God's eternal love. Man was made in God's image and abused his power; and was taught the way of life, and perverted judgment; he was given command over the forces of all nature's dominion, and used these energies to defame and degrade the ideal of God's kingdom. The son of the house was sent to appeal to their better feelings; they said, "Let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours," "We can do as we like with it." What shall the lord of the vineyard do? Shall he not let the floods cover the earth and destroy mankind? Shall he not cast them away as utterly vile? Has man any claim upon God? And this is the answer of God, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son." He was

determined that man should not perish, that man should have eternal life; and so "He spared not His own son." This is the message of the Bible, and of the church of Christ.

"I love to hear the story
Which angel voices tell,
How once the King of Glory
Came down on earth to dwell."

There are old men who remember yet how wonderful the story was, when first their mothers used to tell them about it. It was like some marvellous fairy tale which delighted, but which they could not then believe. They could not imagine how the sweet child who reasoned with the doctors in the temple could be both God and man, and they could not see either why God should permit His son to die upon the shameful cross. And they have never ceased to wonder, though they have been called by Christ and have left all and followed Him. It was a charming story then; it is an inspiring and comforting fact to us now; and in the ages yet to come multitudes will burn with love to

Him who first *so loved us* and gave Himself a ransom for many.

You can perhaps even now imagine Him, serious, yet tender and bright, as He went about the workshop at Nazareth, or sat upon the hill against which the city was built, gazing beyond the yellow sand of the Great Sea, past the ultramarine band which bounded the human vision, to the coming of the sons and daughters from afar, and to the swelling sails which in time to come should bring the nations home to their desire and hope. You can see Him subject to Mary, the holy virgin mother, and growing in wisdom and in stature, just as the Great Father desires you to be subject to the corrective influences of this life, and to gather strength for the future.

Think yet more closely of Him, and you will note that the Son of God was then preparing to save you; He was providing all things needed for the battle against your ensnarer and enemy; against the sin which doth so easily beset you and lead you away captive.

We are all sinners, and need a greater strength than our own to lift us out of the slough of iniquity. You may have a garden; and you plant in season what will in time be beautiful flowers, and say, "By such a time this bed will be covered with geraniums, and fuschias, and petunias, and lobelia, and other flowers." And the time comes, but not the flowers. Why? The seed was good, the plant healthy, the leaf promising, and no insect has devoured it; but it could not grow, for it had no strength in itself. The rain and the sun have been unkindly and cold, dull days and chilly nights have prevented its development. But by and by the sun shines out and gentle growing showers fall, and buds and gems of colour are opened to the delighted eye.

You are the plant which God has planted. You have in you power to do something, but you cannot unaided get the better of your condition of trial, temptation, and evil tendency. Only the Sun of Righteousness, only the Sun and Shield of the Christian can

give the increase, can free us from our enemy.

"I am both weak and sinful,
But this I surely know—
The Lord came down to save me
Because He loved me so."

Now what will this salvation be? He will take us to heaven we know; but more than that, He will prepare us to enjoy Heaven, and to live a useful life here.

Now see what a difference there is here between Christianity and paganism!

In our own country the priests of the Druidic faith made men burn to death basket-work cages full of human beings to please the gods; and often they required parents to sacrifice their own little boys and girls to avert some great calamity. In India men were urged to torture themselves in many ways, and to throw themselves beneath the car of Juggernaut to be crushed to death, under the belief that by this sacrifice they would be saved. And in more modern times missionaries have always found

that the more idolatrous a nation is, the more cruel, the more vile, the more exposed to cannibalism and all degrading practices. You find there no hospitals built for love; only fear of a plague will ever raise any human hand in work of this kind. Everywhere heathenism makes men cruel. The Romans used to chain their slaves in the porches as watchdogs, and when they offended them, crucified them, or threw them into the eel ponds for food.

Christianity was just the opposite. When you read the Epistles you are continually coming across mention of some act of charity or kindness. And one of the first duties is always love and care of the brethren!

The footsteps of Christ were full of healing. Wherever He went you could find out by the gratitude of some poor man or woman to whom He had shewn compassion, that He had passed that way. He not only was full of loving works Himself, but He made all about Him do good too. Even Judas was sent out to heal the sick, cleanse the leper, and bless the cities

he entered. Said Christ, "Freely ye have received, freely give."

And everybody expected His disciples to heal them. Doing good with a good true heart was the sign, then as now, by means of which men found out the Christian.

"I'm glad my blessed Saviour,
Was once a child like me;
To show how pure and holy
His little ones might be.
And if I try and follow
His footsteps here below,
He never will forget me,
Because He loves me so."

Remember then the sign—active, real, help-ful love. St. John in his first Epistle puts it in this way. He says, "he that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in Him." And by this working Christ's work, and teaching Christ's doctrine, and obeying Christ's spirit of purest love, we

learn to realize His Salvation and His blessed work in us.

And then there is the promise which reaches beyond the grave. There is everlasting life freely promised to those who believe and do according to His Love.

If we live close beside Jesus always, we shall not need to seek Him in the hour of death. He will never leave us, nor forsake us then! It is not the will of His Father that even the little ones should be allowed to be lost.

We often think of the glorious band of choristers in heaven, and we picture Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and an innumerable company of martyrs all with harps for praise. But do we forget that such a large number of those who stand yonder are children like ourselves? Why many of the early martyrs who were boldest in the hour of immortality, were boys and girls not sixteen years of age! The Romans could understand men being able to endure death with manly composure; but the fact that mothers and children were

"tortured, not accepting deliverance," affected them to such an extent, that at last the cruel combats and fierce persecution were abated in deference to the power of the crucified Jesus. And these boys and girls are in the heavenly throng awaiting you with palms of victory in their hands.

Have you palms yet? I mean have you overcome the tempter? Have you suffered for Christ? Have you boldly witnessed to your love of this great and good God? Why are there so few communicants among young people. Many "have promised to serve Him to the end?" How is it that so few will testify to their love of Christ in this way? How many are carefully preparing themselves, as Jesus did, by the study of God's truth? My children think of this, and even you may become very useful to the Saviour yet. And when you feel discouraged, and are conscious of depression, never forget that the crown is of Immortality, one that fadeth not away,

"For He hath kindly promised,"

and God is not a man that He should repent and take back His word.

"He hath kindly promised,
That even I may go,
To sing among His angels,
Because He loves me so."

"God commendeth His love to us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for the ungodly."

SERMON XXIII.

"Stars Sparkle Above, Primroses Below."

(Flower Service).

I CHRON., XXIX., 9.

"Then the people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly, because with perfect heart they offered willingly to the Lord: and David the king also rejoiced with great joy."

DAVID was become an old man, and great in his humility. God had told him his hands were not clean enough for him to build the temple his heart designed; and though his feelings were hurt without doubt at first, he acted a strong and honourable part immediately after. Many a king would have sulked, and resented his rejection. Many a less honourable and less able man withdraws his influence and support from any movement unless he be

allowed to discharge the functions of the chief office. But David did not this. If unable to build, he could prepare; if unable to be publicly identified with erection, he could strengthen the hands of his son, Solomon. And David determined so to do. He first gave himself of the National Treasure, and followed the gift by a private donation of a considerable amount. Then he called the nation, and took them into his counsel, and asked them to do as they were able and disposed. First the rulers, and then the people offered willingly, both in gold and silver, and in precious stones; and in the gift the blessing came, and they all rejoiced for the spirit which was in the heart of the people.

To-day, we bring not gold but flowers to the House of Prayer, but we, like ancient Israel, are preparing for the building of a temple, the living temple of God.

"Here, Lord, we offer Thee all that is fairest, Flowers in their freshness, from garden and field, Gifts for the stricken ones—knowing Thou carest."

You have all heard, perhaps, of the tiny

tender plant which grew up in a hole in the pavement of a French prison, and of the affectionate care with which the convict tended it day after day; how he stored the rain drops, sheltered it from wind, and gave it all the sunshine he could reflect upon it, until the iron heel of a cruel official crushed it to death in a paroxysm of anger. And yet the children cull the most delicately shaded blooms in God's beautiful garden, and heedlessly throw them away mangled and dying. How differently people look upon these marvellously sweet creations of God. But those who bring these bunches of blossom to a Flower Service cannot think carelessly about such matters, since they know how valuable they will soon be in the hospital ward, or in the slum reeking with vileness-material and moral. I know that you thought of this while you gathered and arranged your bonnie nosegays this morning, or when they were gathered.

Now I am going to ask one or two questions, and the first is this: "Did not the flowers look

best where they were found?" Those lilac and blue forget-me-nots, which your warm hands have made to bow their heads with faintness, have you not spoiled them and the bank upon which they grew? And those marguerites, and that meadowsweet, spread out and mingled with ragged foliage, have you improved their appearance by huddling the heads together. And those orchids, and those late primroses, and that golden marsh-marigold, is it not a shame to crowd them so together? And you know, you left that geranium plant very bare, and robbed the early rose until scarcely a bud was to be seen? Is it not foolish. And this is not all. Those branches you so proudly bring will only be seen in some attic or stable loft, in a broken pot of some kind, before the morrow is over. Don't you regret having taken all the pains to spoil your own display for this?

Wait! Before you answer I will tell you more. In a dirty alley are houses crowded so closely that you can scarcely see the sky. A sickly odour pervades everything. Children

play with the mud, and drink in delights when the scavenger washes the flags with his hose. In some of these houses are ten rooms, and in some of these rooms live several families. Some of these are sick. They do not lie upon spring mattresses, nor upon bedsteads at all, but upon the floor, with the rain dripping through the ceiling upon them, or, in summer, sick with heat, and feverish. That is not all. They once lived in green lanes and rambled under shady trees to pull the flowers you have to-day. Larks used to sing for them, and they heard the dormouse in the hedge, and now they remember it all in these attics and stable lofts, and they are poor and can scarcely buy food.

The door is open and a lady visitor walks in. She opens her basket and takes one of those bunches out, and puts it in the broken jar. The baby claps its hands and the sick woman's eyes greedily devour the old features of God's nature, once so familiar to her. And the tender sympathetic word is spoken, the baby is fondled and hope springs brighter. God has not left

Himself without witness, and His witness is that bunch of flowers. Is this not an answer to my question.

> "Here, Lord, we offer Thee all that is fairest, Gifts for the stricken ones."

Messengers of Thine abiding mercy crying back the memory to the days of greater trust in Thee.

My second question is, "What are you expecting will be the good they will do?"

What can flowers do? Even if they give pleasure for a time, will they feed the hungry, give health to the sick, or provide money for the poor?

Let us see. Firstly, you are blessed in giving. You cannot do a good action for the advantage of another without feeling happier. Children who never deny themselves for others are *never* happy. It is always more blessed to give than to receive. Why the very flowers we pull teach us a lesson. How long it takes some of them to grow, how much they have to submit to in winter's cold, spring's rains, and

summer's burning blast; and every one has to become matured and wither to be of service. When you are ill, your parents get you medicine, often sweetened and coloured to make it agreeable; and this medicine which restores you much of it grows in the woods in the form of flowers and herbs. And the poultices you feel such relief from are made often from marsh mallow, and camomile flowers, and the seed of the gorgeous poppy. These flowers are themselves grown by the Heavenly Gardener that they may be used as healers. Imitate these flowers, my friends. Let your thoughts always be bent upon doing good to the friendless and needy.

Then flowers in the slums take away a great danger to society. Men who live under such very unfavourable conditions often become ravenous, and savage, and riotous. They learn to misunderstand those who are in a better condition of life, and to hate them, and do them all the harm they can. They rob them, and insult them, and in many

ways produce a very bad feeling between rich and poor, between Christians and bad men and women. Flower Services, and bunches which shew that love of the poor has made children gather the flowers, and the remembrance of better, purer days, which the flowers themselves encourage, proves that everywhere men are brothers, and are closely bound together by Christian love and other interests.

"Speak, Lord, by these to the sick and the dying, Speak to their hearts with a message of peace, Comfort the sad who in weakness are lying, Grant the departing a gentle release."

Be God's true servants, filling the dark places of the earth with the tokens of His love, giving "Gladness for sorrow, and brightness for gloom."

But the flowers have another message, and this time to us. They tell of the change and decay of the forms and forces of this life. With the intense heat of summer the sweet primrose passes away, and the flowers of spring alike blossom and fall away. Others take their

place in a measure, but do not deliver just the peculiar message which was heard in the early flowers. These have shed their seed, and are preparing for the rising again of next springtime.

"We, Lord, like flowers, in our autumn must wither, We, like these blossoms, must fade and must die."

And how many blooms are withered long before we think they can be spared. How earnest and workful we should be while still the little day is at our service. Think again of those slums I spoke of before. Are you willing to be missed there before you have prepared them to do without you.

As you grow older, and enter upon business pursuits, you may meet with many whom the flower's message of a seasonable kindness has enabled to tide over the stress of trial, and to make a start in life. May you treat them then as you are now, with Christian love and helpful charity.

We cannot always be a blessing to even our parents. Do not forget this when you are

sending flowers to the pained and poor, whom you do not know. Jesus shewed us an example when in the throes of the agony of Calvary. He could think of and provide for the comfort of His mother. Remember your parents never become so used to kindness on the part of their children as to be insensible and irresponsible. And the flower yields up in seeding and dying its life for the strength of the future, so may we be found so naturally giving our lives for the Church and for suffering humanity, that we can in confidence pray,

"Gather us, Lord, to Thy bosom for ever, Grant us a place in Thy home in the sky."

SERMON XXIV.

"The Joy of the Reaper!"

(Harvest Festival).

St. John IV., 36.

"And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal; that both he that soweth, and he that reapeth may rejoice together."

AGAIN we celebrate the gathering-in of the fruits of our labours, of the eternal demonstration of the firmness of God's promise, and of the providence of that nature which is His law in creation. The varying weather and dangers from many quarters have been met and safely overcome. The golden grain, cast into the soil to die, has lived in manifold returns, and the dull brown soil has yielded abundantly of that energy which is her own. The merry shout of joy has crowned the Harvest Home, and the relief of mind from bravely combated fear has

filled the soul of the farmer with a deep thanksgiving to the Author of all good. He has no longer the wearing anxiety of the seed time and of the day of the springing blade. In the garner is safely laid his living, and the food of His cattle, and of his family, too, for the coming winter.

And yet he remembers all the trial and all the worry of the earlier stages of development in the corn. The tiny yellow-green spots which resolved themselves into blades, and then became ears full of meat; the uneasy nights when rain and wind beat down the waving heads of grain; and the disappointment when stalk and fruit alike appeared ready to die for lack of water and sunlight. He remembers all these, but the sting is gone; and as a warrior looks back upon the travail of a successful campaign, so he now regards the various steps and trials which led to victory. And only when at rest and freed from the excitement of struggle, can he rightly understand how one trouble and escape, one labour and success, led to another;

and, also, how at every turn, he was dependent upon the sure covenant of a redeeming God; an untimely drought, a flood devastating his fields, a season of cold and damp, a plague of insect vermin, an unfertile seed—all these were influences, more or less, prohibitive of success, and all, more or less, fatal to a good harvest. When, therefore, the true man, the good Christian, sets up his shocks of corn, full and golden, he feels how great and good God has been all through; and an exultation in the Almighty and All-loving fills his breast. And when he is reminded that the life of millions of his fellow-countrymen, the happiness of the poorer classes, and, to some large extent, the morality of many of the humbler citizens of the empire, depend for favourable conditions upon him and such as he is, a pride which is right and justified lifts him above the level of the mere business man, and makes him to know and to feel that he is a co-worker with God.

"The sower went forth sowing;
The seed in secret slept

Through weeks of faith and patience,

Till out the green blade crept.

And warmed by golden sunshine,

And fed by silver rain,

At last the fields were whitened

To harvest once again.

O praise the heavenly sower

Who gave the fruitful seed,

And watched and watered daily,

And ripened for our need."

And as seed time and harvest in the physical world, so are they in the spiritual. God and man are, or should be, united in the development of our and our fellows' spiritual life and work. Things do not happen by accident; but cause and effect are inseparable even here. A strong and influential church does not exist without a consecrated and prayerful membership. Even the word "preach" does not edify, saving when "mixed with grace in them that hear." The Church cannot either conserve her own liberties in the State, nor direct effectively the machinery and mind of that State, unless the kingdom of God grow in her as the seed of mustard becomes a great tree; and only when churchmen are

found willing to suffer personal loss for Christ, and to become martyrs for their God, is it ever possible to vindicate her rightful claim, or to assert her glorious life. A formal attendance on Christian worship does not make us Christians; neither can a formal observance of all her sacraments make us churchmen of Jesus Christ. We need the self abnegation of seed sowing, the humility of the covered embryo, which has life, yet seemeth dead, the vigour and energy of the green blade which obtrudes the principle of the divine life in us upon a world often hostile and generally derisive. We must have growth in grace and in the knowledge of God. We must become given to charity, too, and be helpers of men, before we can ever consider the very possibility of a harvest. We cannot take up the thread of our life just where it appears convenient to us that we should do so. We must enter by the door into the sheepfold. even. How much St. Peter had to go back before he became a true disciple of the Lord! He said, "I am willing to go with Thee to

prison and death," and yet he denied his Lord whom he loved so dearly. St. Peter had to be converted before he could strengthen the brethren. And yet a great many people think they can dispense with the elementary and principal stages of their life. Only when we learn to know the love of God, can we shew love to our brother-men. Only when we appreciate the great self-humbling of Jesus by His incarnation and crucifixion, can we know how to bow our heads to the discipline of our Father in heaven.

And yet we are expected to learn of Jesus, and to not only experience His salvation ourselves, but to lead others to Him that they may become heirs of God even as we are.

"Behold the heavenly sower
Goes forth with better seed—
The word of sure salvation,
With feet and hands that bleed.
Here in His church 'tis scatter'd
Our spirits are the soil;
Then let an ample fruitage
Repay his pain and toil.

O beauteous is the harvest,
Wherein all goodness thrives;
And this the true thanksgiving—
The first fruits of our lives."

And good, the fruit of the spirit, lives eternal. We sow, another cultivates, God gives increase; and long after we are laid to rest in God's acre, a judgment is set on high, and it is found that good done to the least of Christ's disciples is counted as done to the King Himself! Again, the fruits of a good life become seed, too. Chastened, pure, and holy, His saints are placed in their positions of obscurity. With their feet toward the rising sun, and their faces up toward the light, now hidden from their blind, dead, eyes, their body decays and falls away—yet as surely to rise again, and as certainly to enter into the great presence as God's promise and love can make it. We "bury our dead out of our sight," as the farmer covers the precious seed. Tears are shed, but not the hopeless tears of despair. The eyes we have seen troubled and tear-filled shall open again

before long, where they never weep and never are troubled. The frail body will be formed like unto His glorious body. The weary face will kindle before the glories of the Lamb of God which died and rose again. The ultimate result of earth's work will become the infant's first step in the Better Land, where, relieved from pain and weakness, joy shall be found by each longing soul in the Faith of Christ, in the Sight of God. Let none of us lose heart because of the failures, and of the broken columns of this life. Earth is not the ultimate, the result of earth is not final. The product of earth is often not even complete. In the land of eternal summer the broken lines will be made whole, the feeble will become stalwart, the tremulous saint will lead the way, and the uncertain shall see all things plainly. The "well done" of God shall chase away the gloomy fears and misgivings we, many of us, have; and many an impotent man, and blind and dumb, shall comfort us with the record of how little acts of love and grace wrought

for them the power to become sons of God.

- "Within a hallowed acre,
 He sows yet other grain,
 When peaceful earth receiveth
 The dead He died to gain;
 For though the growth be hidden,
 We know that they shall rise;
 Yea even now they ripen
 In sunny Paradise.
 O summer land of harvest,
 O fields for ever white,
 With souls that wear Christ's raiment,
 With Crowns of golden light!
- "One day the heavenly Saviour, Shall reap where He hath sown, And come again rejoicing, And with Him bring His own. And then the fan of judgment, Shall winnow from His floor The chaff into the furnace That flameth evermore. O holy, awful Reaper Have mercy in the day, Thou puttest in Thy sickle, And cast us not away."

SERMON XXV.

"The Drill=room and the Bivouac!"

(voiunteers).

Ерн. VI., 13.

"Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand."

E NGLAND'S safety consists in the manhood of her sons to a very great extent. Were her men and women to degenerate, the day would not be far distant when the sea and our Navy could no longer be trusted to as even a first line of defence. In the most glorious of our wars, when we have been fighting for our rights and liberty, numerically our force has been much inferior to that of our enemy. And the secret of our success lay not in our wealth, for often we were in money the poorest, not in favourable conditions of any kind, but in the

trust and firmness with which we suffered defeats without accepting them, and acquiring skill by the discipline of disasters, learned to conquer. Not the physique, but the moral qualities of our men have been our deliverance.

Emotionalism and brag are alike unhelpful in the world of arms and in that of religion. Our hope is only in the capacity for bearing the cross in our adversity and our weakness. The love of war, for itself alone, is not a sign of courage, but of weakness. The soldiers who hate the horror of war, the loss of a campaign, the unsettlement of relations of international friendship, the hungering and the slaying of innocent women and children, these are they to whom our Nation looks for defence and strength. All conflict, of brute force, of mental energy, of spiritual influences which are in any way even good, is to be avoided as wasteful, although it is sometimes forced upon us for high ends. A nation of calm, well-principled, consistent men and women may laugh at armoured millions and stamping army gods. The War of American

Union shewed this clearly. Calmly the Northerners went from their desks and farms, and laid their bones in the swamps of Tenessee, until the bubble of secession exploded, and black and white at last were free. Calmly our fathers absorbed the Norman invaders, and made them English, until at last they avenged Hastings at Crecy and Poictiers. And in a day of danger, when the mailed hand menaced our shores, the Citizen Army of Civilians was called into being. There was no lust for battle; we had too much to lose by it. Without being an appreciable burden upon the State, however, men of peace prepared for war, that the liberty their fathers bought might be assured by the blood of their descendants. And the result of this institution, both Christian and English, has simply been this, that since it firmly took hold upon the nation, though hundreds of thousands have passed through its ranks, no war beyond what might be regarded as police expeditions has afflicted our people and our trade. Much nonsense is talked with regard to the military

spirit supposed to be fostered by various quasimilitary societies in connection with our church. Has the Volunteer Force made England more aggressive, less scrupulous of her neighbour's rights, more spiteful, and more susceptible to insult? No! Envies may provoke, rivalry may make jealous, a position of proud predominance, such as is ours among the nations, may be very galling. But so long as England's foundation for action lies in her national righteousness, so long as her Army is so largely a defensive one, no attack upon our position can succeed, and no dangerous enterprises can lure us from the stronghold of God's truth.

There are two essentials in the soldier's work. Strength, or health, and efficiency. Without these no army is safe, no nation can trust her defenders. No puny, delicate, deformed, feeble candidate can be passed for admission to the army. In some armies even a defect in a gland, a deformation of the ear, or other very trifling fault, is enough to reject the recruit. It is terrible to think that those who

die in war's carnage are of necessity the strongest and healthiest of our sons. But it is necessary that every man who goes into battle shall be able to do just what he is trusted to do.

And in the work of our civilian life it is just the same. The weak go to the wall, the incompetent and unfit become stepping stones upon which their natural superiors climb to power and usefulness. "To him that hath shall be given."

And in the spiritual life too, those who are living out of accord with the spiritual law of health get behind in the race for life eternal. Yielding to a depraved appetite, to a sensuous craving, to a weakening habit, not only unfits the soldier for the bivouac and fatigue march, it robs the civilian of his business, of his health, of his capacity for getting, giving, and enjoying, and often stands like a wall, or hangs, like a veil of earth-born clouds, between the Christian and his Lord. We must cultivate strength, and not only enjoy it. 'Soldiers of Christ' we all hope we are.

"Soldiers of Christ arise,
And put your armour on,
Strong in the Strength which God supplies
Through His Eternal Son."

Many years ago the cricket club and athletic society were looked upon as just so many means of arranging for the play and frolic of the young. Now, in nearly every Church congregation, some method of encouraging the development, and improving the health of young and old is adopted, as a valuable preparative to spiritual growth. And in our debating societies, and our Bible classes, and our guilds for education, and our continuation classes, we are simply testifying to the view we hold of the urgent necessity for every man, woman, and child to be strong in every way for the service of the Lord and those for whom He died. And while we guard the body and mind we also provide for the need of the Spirit. In the restored frequency of Holy Communion Celebrations, and in the more Spiritual and helpful rendering of the beautiful Ritual of our Church, we try to

make men firmer in temptation, stronger in work, wiser in counsel, truer in speech, and generally more like "servants who wait for their Lord."

"Strong in the Lord of Hosts,
And in His mighty power,
Who in the Strength of Jesus trusts
Is more than conqueror."

Whether then in physical preparation, or in mental exercise and attainment, or in Spiritual work.

"Stand then in His great might, With all His Strength endued."

But efficiency is also called for.

Untrained brute force may in the clash of battle be a snare to the whole army. A well-drilled force is worth more than three times its number of undisciplined men of good arms and splendid physique. Courage ill-directed is often worse than timidity. Hence Gideon's tiny troops completed the demoralisation and destruction of the hosts of the Midianites. The well trained legions of the Roman veterans defeated the Britons, who, in immense numbers, and backed

by the frenzy of their fanaticism, made a last stand against Suetonius in Anglesea; and at Plassey, Clive scattered one of the most imposing armies India ever brought into the field. Efficiency always tells, and every one of you is anxious that when required you may be able to give a good account of yourselves. And herein is the strength of the Church of Christ. "Leaving those things which are behind we press forward."

Are you pressing forward in *all* your nature? While training head, and eye, and hand, are you also becoming more helpful to the Lord in *all* the varied occupations of your life?

When our Lord's disciples were left alone, and after Pentecost, they might have said, "We have known the Lord, we are converted to His doctrine, we are able to work miracles, we will still learn and keep quiet." But they did not. They, like some of us, might have said, "What can we unlettered fishermen do?" "How can we turn the world upside down, and change the axis of the moral sphere?" But they did not.

They went everywhere, preaching the Gospel. The rulers charged them not to speak in This name; and yet in Jesus they waxed more bold until at last these poor and humble men became the chosen teachers of learned and simple, of Jew and Gentile, of bond and free in all parts of the known world, and such letters as they wrote, which are still extant, are read with reverence in all the church. Would we follow their example, and lay hold on their crown?

"From strength to strength go on,
Wrestle and fight and pray,
Tread all the powers of darkness down,
And win the well-fought day."

The earthly soldier looks for the recognition of his sovereign. We look for the "Well done" of ours.

In every step successfully planted in the morass of our walk and work we gain courage for the next. Every stone securely placed heartens us for the preparation of the following course. The healthy child trained becomes the healthy man, *subject* to the corrective and

directive influences of the All Teacher. And as we climb the mountain, the air becomes clearer, and contains less of the taint of earth, and of the distracting influence of this life, and we

> "See the heaven we love, With unbeclouded eyes."

What a difference there is between the Alpine valley, where the sun is only seen for a short time, and the shadows of departing day tread closely on those of daybreak, and the mountain top many thousands of feet above. Silver clouds and snowy peaks, glistening and clear, set here and there, even as reaching to the skies, gemmed with emerald lakes, and tasseled with ragged pine forests. Yes, up in the hills where the harsh Alpine horn becomes in echoes sweeter harmonies than cathedral organ ever gave birth to. This is the goal we seek, the City of our pilgrimage's hope, the land flowing with milk and honey.

No more jargons, jangles, and contentions; no longer any mistaken feelings, any cause for

distrust. The full-grown man, the efficient soldier, rises into a heaven

"Where all is fellowship, Where all is peace."

"Ye may obtain through Christ alone A crown of joy at last."

SERMON XXVI.

"The Power of Christianity."

(Hospital).

MARK I., 33-34.

"And all the city was gathered together at the door.

And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him."

HAT a stirring sight! It was in wicked, rich, luxurious Capernaum. Not in the streets lined with palaces, and patrolled by Romans, nor in any of those public places to which men resorted after the rest of the siesta to discuss the news of the day, nor in those houses where the young nobles, Jewish and Italian, most met to gamble and trifle and drink. "He shall not strive, nor cry, neither shall His voice be heard in the streets," one had said of Him; and He was not found anywhere

obtruding Himself upon the notice of the great ones of this world. It was in a little house of the fisherman's quarter whither He had come from the synagogue. Here Simon and Andrew lived, and in this close stifling atmosphere, a poor woman tossed in the delirium of fever. He heard it as He sat, and healed her so that she was able to rise from her bed and wait upon the company.

He had wrought a wonderful miracle that day; a man with an unclean devil had been restored in a public place, even in the synagogue; the people were amazed, astonished and attentive. His fame spread in all directions; others, filled with hope, were borne to the Great Physician, the crowd gathered, the thoroughfare was blocked, the power was present to heal, and many who had lost hope rejoiced and glorified God. This is, in short, the history of the words of our text, the summary of the events. There were soldiers there, curious and contemptuous, priests suspicious and jealous, Hellenists mildly interested but careless, rough fishermen carrying

their nets down to the Lake,—all sorts of men and women. And some were *not* there. The gambling proceeded, the sentry went on and off duty, the chariot dashed down the street, the intriguers still plotted and knew not of the work which was robbing life of its terror and pain, and filling with courage the castaway of despair.

"At even, ere the sun was set,
The sick, O Lord, around thee lay,
Oh, in what divers pains they met,
Oh, with what joy they went away."

So it ever is. Think of the thousands of beds in Christendom filled by Christian charity with victims of disease or disaster, many of whom would die unaided, unhelped, unfed, were it not for Christian institutions and Christian love beneath and behind them. And yet how slight is the knowledge even of many sympathizers as to the need and value of hospital service! And how much less does the careless, selfish world, for all the salvation of otherwise wasted energy, all the restored hopes and faculties, all the

strength vouchsafed to impotent and feeble humanity.

Christians must be prepared for this. We are often tempted to leave their share of such burdens to these unfeeling, inhumane worldlings, and to feel that having done our proportion of the work, we have done enough. Brethren, these will never do their part, will never bear their proper burden. It is not natural to expect the carnal mind to be subject to the law of God. Until the love of God finds its way to a man's heart, he has no room for designs in self-denial; and the church must in the future, as in the past, be prepared to meet all the demands suffering humanity makes upon her. To Christ's disciples the hospitals look for help; and they cannot wait in vain.

The Church of Christ is itself a Bethesda. To her resort all the needy, the weak, and the suffering, and in her Lord they find their Healer now as of olden time.

[&]quot;Once more 'tis eventide, and we Oppressed with various ills draw near;

What if thy form we cannot see, We know and feel that thou art here.

O Saviour Christ, our woes dispel,
For some are sick and some are sad,
And some have never loved thee well,
And some have lost the love they had."

And many naturally gravitate to the assembly of God's people, knowing as yet little of their soul's deep wound. They know they are miserable, that their life is ineffective, a life of broken links, and yet either have not the courage to boldly come confessing their sins, or are deceiving themselves, saying they have no sin.

"And some have found the world is vain,
Yet from the world they break not free,
And some have friends who give them pain,
Yet have not sought a friend in thee.

And none, O Lord, have perfect rest,
For none are wholly free from sin;
And they who fain would serve thee best,
Are conscious most of wrong within."

Is this not the burden of our most solemn confession? There is no health in us, no help in man. It is the boast of the Christian that

"Whosoever will may come and drink of the water of life freely." There is no guilt so deeply crimson that the Blood of the Holy Sacrifice will not wash it white. There is no heartache religion will not soothe, no ignorance the doctrine of the Word of God will not enlighten. Let us ever remember this, to this house we not only bring our own troubles, but hither shall be brought the halt, the lame, the blind, and all waiting for the angel to trouble the healing water.

And we come with confidence. "He knoweth our frame." "He hath been tempted in all points even as we." He is acquainted alike with our weakness and our strength, with our sickness and our resisting power. None can diagnose our diseases as He can, no pharmacopæa so clearly indicate the only remedy.

"O Saviour Christ, Thou too art man,
Thou hast been troubled, tempted, tried,
Thy kind, but searching glance can scan
The very wounds that shame would hide."

Unlike any earthly physician, He does not

depend upon what we tell Him. He tries our reins; no secret clog obstructs the probe of His loving interest, and the pain we hide and the disease we try to ignore He locates without the slightest trouble. He does not shrink from using the knife; for though He hates to wound, He hates more to see us create wounds ourselves for our hurt. His word is like a two-edged sword even here. He can divide and clearly distinguish the harmless from the noxious. By the sharp discipline of His corrective, He reclaims the wayward soul; and the love nearly dead is revived by the consuming fire of His sympathy.

"Thy touch has still its ancient power,

No word from Thee can fruitless fall,

Hear in this solemn evening hour,

And in Thy mercy heal us all."

Are you sinning against the Light, my brother? Do you come here week after week and hear the invitations of the Gospel of Jesus, and go back unconscious of your need for closer communion with God? Do not so misunder-

stand yourself; do not neglect the call of Christ.

Many seem to leave repentance to the criminal and the outcast and the vile, as though this could not affect them of necessity. My brethren, you are criminal; for you are guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord." You crucify Him afresh daily by your cold or lukewarm demeanour before Calvary, and as a criminal you need to repent.

You are outcast, for the leprosy of your soul's degradation has cut you off from the kindred of the spiritual Israel. You are vile; for although you may have become used to your present condition, and be no longer offended by its outward and visible sign, the angels of God cannot give you a clean bill of health. Even they who are in Christ in spirit and in truth cannot boast; for they are unprofitable servants. How then, shalt thou stand, O man, in the judgment of mankind? Where are the talents thy Lord gave to thy keeping? Where the spirit of power He charged thee to present to

the world? Do you offend others, keep them from Service, check their enthusiam, impede the development of God's life in their hearts? It were better that a mill-stone were hanged about your neck and you were cast into the sea, than that you should offend God's little ones. If you will not walk heavenward yourself, you have no right to obstruct the King's highway. Are you doing so? If so, repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Alas! how we all need to take this warning to heart; and yet even at our worst we have a glorious hope, nay, certainty of help from God. He healed that motley crowd of Jews and aliens in the days of old; He will heal us. All our vileness He will bear away, and our crime shall be for ever a transgression hidden, hidden by the love of the Great Redeemer.

Let us help men to heal physical disease and alleviate human pain; but above all things let our prayer be "Heal us, O Christ, Deliver me, O Lord, for I am poor and needy."

SERMON XXVII.

"The Union of Ibearts!"

(Friendly Societies).

Ps. CXXXIII., 1.

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."

In an Eastern palace this is a rare phenomenon, and stability of government, permanency of reforms, and continuity of policy are never known. Polygamy and its associate disintegrating influences, the scope allowed to the courtier, and the despotic rule upon the throne, are all factors of unrest, of destruction, of waste. As in Oriental despotisms of to-day, so even the political solidarity of Israel depended largely upon the king, and upon the extent to which he was guided by good counsellors or bad. Hence we find the nation oscillating between sun worship and

spiritual religion, between a desire to develope the resources of land and nation, and military exploits. A good king made the people glad, and confident, and strong; a bad king brought shame and confusion of face, and internecine strife, and jealousies, and bitterness to all with whom he had the mastery.

We can imagine, therefore, that the Psalm we have chosen our text from must have been written when this rare lesson of wisdom was being learned—when the king's household were in amity and at peace, when the various factions among the counsellors were agreed, and when each department, whether of state or society, seemed desirous to fulfil its high vocation, and do what was possible to make the kingdom stable and respected.

Hope is the foundation of all organization. Hope absent, the purpose of association not given, all bonds are merely accidental, and are slipped—not even broken—at every new event. Although the Friendly Society's work was doubtless as old as man's appreciation of its

advantages, the earliest Christian churches were evidently important centres of this activity. There is no doubt that many of the churches at Rome at least were in a sense, so far as the public was concerned, Burial Clubs; and without doubt in times of persecution this blending of two objects preserved the early Christians from many penalties, while affording an avenue by which well-intentioned pagans might be lured to the light of Christianity. Thus the sexton, or fossor, from the days of primitive Roman Christianity, has been closely associated with the Church, and in the Catacomb inscriptions, evidence is not lacking as to his duties and position. And in the line of this series of epitaphs we are able to see how religion altered the very conception of death in the minds of Christian converts. The tablets more and more bore emblems of the cardinal principles of our faith, and in these caverns we find the clearest corroboration of church history. Here, under the guidance of the Spirit of Christian Charity, the rich arranged for his own Christian

burial, and here he helped his poorer brethren to the last consolation of this life.

And the modern Friendly Society is only a fuller development of the same idea. They comforted the sorrowing in bereavement, we succour those whose sorrow is the product of privation. Both are alike Christian, and both alike are constructive and restorative. The complete ideal we have not yet reached; but so far as we have attained to the work of God it is certain that we are helping on the triumph of His life among men.

There may be many who think not at all of the matter in this light; to them it is merely provision against evil, the avoidance of hunger. But even they are working for humanity and for God, though no credit be due to them. Nothing that makes men firmer in trial, that reduces temptation to vice and degradation, that improves man's prospect of restoration, can but be pleasing to God.

But these are a small minority compared with the multitude who join these societies from a sense of duty, and who as patriots, as Christians, as brothers, band themselves together to help the weak and reduce the number of castaways, and of waifs and strays.

Many may remember the great cotton famine during the American War, when thousands of respectable men and women and little children died of simple starvation. Alas! that many, desparate and hungry, did worse than die in the clamour for the poorest bread. Seeds of vice were sown then which have even yet their baleful progeny represented in all parts of the country. Wretchedness unspeakable fell upon the whole land at the woe of the brethren. Is it not Christian to provide against a disease, a death, like this? Many a family has been kept from the abyss of pauperism, yea, from the grave, by the operation of our principle. And we thank God from whom the inspiration comes. The Christian's hope produced it, and the Christian's confidence in the possibilities opened to man made life worth fighting for, a living with self-respect to be desired.

"Through the night of doubt and sorrow,
Onward goes the Christian band,
Singing songs of expectation,
Marching to the Promised Land;
Clear before us, through the darkness,
Gleams and burns the guiding light,
Brother clasps the hand of brother,
Stepping fearless through the night."

And your presence here this day is an assertion on your part that your work is more than even a help in pounds, shillings, and pence, more than politic thrift. You come here because you desire to claim unity with all the people of God, in respect of your work. You recognize that labour of the helpful kind is sure to bear its richest fruit in the future. Not only the recipient but the giver is blessed in the brotherly visit, the night watching, the labour sharing, the cheery encouragement, which the British working man so readily renders to his needy friend; and you feel nearer Christ as you go about among your comrades, weeping with the weeper and rejoicing with the glad.

After all, to a greater extent than ever we

think, men are part of each other, and none can live to himself entirely. In our love and reverence of our great Father, we come wonderfully close to each other.

"One the light of God's own presence, O'er His ransomed people shed, Chasing far the gloom and terror, Brightening all the path we tread. One the object of our journey, One the faith which never tires, One the earnest looking-forward, One the hope our God inspires. One the strain that lips of thousands Lift as from the heart of one. One the conflict, one the peril, One the march in God begun; One the gladness of rejoicing, On the far Eternal shore. Where the One Almighty Father Reigns in love for evermore."

The more we help each other, and put away our carnal separatism and the more we become as one in spirit and in aim.

But let us never be satisfied with our present attainments. Blessed is the man who is not contented with himself and his condition of soul. A nation, a church, a family, an individual, without a future, is sure to be a failure in every sense. If we have done much to lighten sorrow, and give men more hope in God, we have, or should have, an incentive to do more good in the time that is coming. We can insist more upon right being supreme over might, upon the Eternal taking precedence of the temporal, upon the due recognition of the Law of God in all our dealings with each other and with those with whom we daily come into contact. Let us ever remember that our organizations must never become tyrannical in any sense, any more than they have been in the past. They are just the instrument by means of which God helps man to work out the Divine Will, and glorify his Creator. Only, as in the direction of our energy we look toward the great Over Master, can we hope to make our work successful. Ever let us keep these words of Holy Writ before us, "the letter killeth, but the Spirit maketh alive." The Spiritual aspect of our work, the Divine foundation in recreative

and restorative power, the call to the faithful servant to come up higher,"—all these should ring in our ears until not only in the lodge, but everywhere our hands will *tempt* us to help.

And then shall come the end, which is the beginning of the Hereafter. A land shall be seen in which are no widows, no fatherless children, no weepings nor moans of pain. It shall be a land of light, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed. There we shall learn what sorrow and pain and poverty here meant, and we shall be glad when we remember the little ones the gentle Saviour lifted into our arms, the healing hope we took from Him to the disconsolate, the sloughs we dragged so many would-be victims out of, and the angel faces which, but for us, might be sullied and wasted.

"Onward, therefore, pilgrim brothers, Onward with the Cross, our aid; Bear its shame and fight its battle, Till we rest beneath its shade. Soon shall come the great awakening, Soon the rending of the tomb, Then the scattering of all shadows, And the end of toil and gloom."

"Even so, come Lord Jesus."

SERMON XXVIII.

"Our Father's Ihome."

Ps. LXXXIV., i.

"How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts."

"We love the place, O God,
Wherein Thine honour dwells,
The joy of Thine abode,
All earthly joy excels."

THE Ancient Israelite might well have delivered himself thus in the wilderness. As in the distant valley, and wady of the desert, he returned with his flock to the camp at night, and saw the curtained tabernacle, cloud-capped and awful, yet peaceful and helpful, the fears and misgivings of the day's wanderings vanished from his mind, and he knew his kindred were still safe, and his homecoming happy and auspicious. As he beheld,

in the distance, the white robed figures busied about the evening sacrifice, and the smoke of the burnt offering rise upon the still air up to heaven, he felt a strange assurance of God's security vouchsafed, of God's promises yet to be fulfilled. And when the tent became the House, and the rude altar was now fashioned of valuable carved work in choice metals, and the psalm was accompanied by the sound of a hundred instruments of music, and the choir marched in solemn procession, and lifted up their voice in joyous refrain, and the sun broke up his white gleams upon the burnished gold and traced work of the temple, more than ever the lew realised that the Lord was in His Holy Temple, and that the Most Holy was behind the Mercy Seat. And especially when the wanderers from Asia Minor, from North Africa, from Gaul and Hungary, and Rome and Spain, and Parthia and Mesopotamia, brought their offerings at the great feasts, and told each other of the great goodness and providence of the Divine Lord of mankind, their heart was

swollen with pride, their national glory seemed assured, and they would not, could not, believe that the abomination of desolation could ever be seen in Jerusalem, nor the eagle standard in her temple.

And do not we exult likewise in the fact of our Churches being, and having been for so many ages, the chosen House of Mercy for all generations? Sometimes we go into some little church in a poor outlying district of the country. The inside is bare, and the walls tell of ages of weather and of the poverty of the worshippers, the tombstones lean among the thick grass, and all about the place indicates the lack of wealth, and of the desire or power to make the House worthy of its Divine Guest. And even here, with no ornate service, with an unmusical choir it may be, and uncomfortable benches, and weatherswept aisles, we feel the blessing of God's presence. As we look upon the empty pews, we begin to go back centuries, and see a succession of humble men and women who, in war and peace, under good report and evil

report, in poverty and deeper poverty, bowed the knee to Our God here. Here they washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, hither they were brought as tiny infants and held before that worn and unbeautiful font, while the holy rite of baptism was administered. By that row of benches they knelt, and consecrated hands confirmed the graces received in baptism. Yonder they stood and were joined together in matrimony, here Sunday by Sunday they listened to the Word of God, and offered up confession and thanksgiving, and knelt in Holy Communion; and at last they were borne out of that door to rest until the Daybreak.

And now, a great cloud of witnesses, they fill with a wondrous and sweet influence the empty church; their glistening forms almost stand out in the dim light, the bareness of everything around is lost sight of, for God everywhere paints pictures of the work of these saints, and beautifies the dilapidated little church with the glory of His presence. Shame

upon those who do not long to prepare all for God's House that will exalt His worship in the eyes of men; but, however it be neglected, and however poor be all its surroundings, we must uncover in His presence there, and become humble in view of the great crowd of the Church Triumphant, who once suffered and conquered here.

"We love the place, O God, Wherein Thine honour dwells."

"How amiable are Thy tabernacles."

We are often charged with idolatry, because of this affection we bear to all about the Father's Home on earth. Is it idolatry?

You have a book or a trinket some dear friend once owned. Is it the same to you as any other similar object never possessed by this friend? Is new furniture just the same to us as, for instance, the little chair in which our mother rocked us to sleep long years ago, or the couch upon which she lay during the years of her old age? Is it reasonable to speak of idolatry in a

connection like this? Is it not natural and right that we should cherish an ancient font in which our fathers were christened, or an altar before which they knelt in communion with the whole Church and Jesus Christ? It is not idolatry which determines us in our attachment to ancient forms, time honoured doctrines, and even objects dear to those who are in the Fellowship, but who have "gone before"

"We love the sacred Font,
For there the Holy Dove,
To pour is ever wont
His blessing from above.
We love Thine Altar, Lord;
O what on earth so dear?
For there, in faith adored,
We find Thy Presence near."

Never let an iconoclastic fanaticism weaken the tenacity with which we cling to all the ancient and heroic associations which crowd around the font, the altar, and the cross. In the symbol of our Faith, affection reaches through the type into the ultimate, and with the help of the form lays hold upon the Spirit whereby we are sealed unto the Day of Redemption. Take away these, and you have a shifting platform, and a doctrine as changeable as man's whim or fancy. By means of these three, with all the sacraments clustering about them, we are built upon the Rock of Christ, and maintain our communication with the Divine Base of Operations, and we decline to surrender on a false charge of idolatry that which gives us the strength of purpose and unity of aim without which "we cannot see God."

There is, however, something even more loved than all these.

"We love the Word of Life,

The word that tells of peace,

Of comfort in the strife,

And joys that never cease."

What a load has been lifted by the reading of the Old and New Testaments systematically as our Church ordains. As we hear the commands of God, the history of His dealings with men, the record of the true Ascent of

Man, we see the iniquity and hatefulness of sin, the evil and unhappiness it causes, the division it produces in the homes and among the hearts of mankind. And we also are able to be encouraged by the eternal reward which always follows to the good and the pure and the true. Moreover, we understand better why there are shadows here as well as sunshiny gleams,—why sadness as well as exulting and perennial joy. The Word that shall abide for ever, sure and steadfast amid the howling of an exasperating lie, the truth of God that "shall prevail though the heavens fall,"

"The Word that tells of Peace, Of Comfort in the strife, And joys that never cease."

We love the House of Prayer! Many a time have we been straightened out of our deformity, had sight pervade our blindness, and heard the Voice of Divine Love for the first time, as we listened to the Record of the Work of the Ages by the Eternal Spirit of Life.

And lastly, we receive hope as we again see

Enoch translated, Elijah caught up, Moses received home weary to rest, Christ leading Captivity Captive and loosing the pains of death.

The time, perhaps, has already come when some of us feel that we have commenced the descent into Jordan. The Ark of the Lord is before us, and the priests that bear it are gone over dry shod. It is our turn to step into the river bed. Can we do it? If so, how is it? Is it not that here we have heard of the Angels in charge, of the Waters that shall not overwhelm us, of the Land of promise, flowing with milk and honey? Have we not received so many accounts from saints who have tasted and seen that the Lord is precious, and know that the flood shall not come nigh unto us.

We think, as we still go down with other pilgrims to the brink, of the joys laid in store for man where the "wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest," and we feel tired, and "ready to depart." As one more pledge is given to life yonder, one more link which detains us here is snapped, and we wonder, and wait for our name to be called.

"We love to sing below
For mercies freely given;
But, Oh, we long to know
The triumph song of Heaven."

And others who have not yet finished their work, who still are engaged in the furtherance of plans which may keep them here for years to come, still hear in this house the angels' song. In our sacred celebratory services we join with angels and archangels, and with the invisible but living saints about the Throne, in ascription of praise and power to God Almighty. Because we so unite with the Triumphal Band in the Heaven above, we have no accord of heart towards worldliness, and vanity, and weakness. We bear in our body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Is it so? Blessed is the man who ever lives in the presence of God. "Better be a door-keeper in the House of my God than dwell in the tents of iniquity," says a wise man of old.

"Lord Jesus give us grace,
On Earth to love Thee more,
In Heaven to see Thy face,
And with Thy Saints adore."

Fight your battles as seeing and receiving personal commands from the Invisible Author of our Salvation, and expecting the glad acclaim of praise which will be "joy in the presence of the Angles of God."

"How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts."

- "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, And Thy tabernacles, O Israel."
- "Blessed is he that Blesseth Thee,"
 And cursed is he that curseth Thee."

SERMON XXIX.

"Seeking the Saviour!"

St. John IX., 36.

"He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?"

THE speaker of these words was a man in dreadful plight. Distrusted by friends, excommunicated from his fellow religionist, in conflict with the recognised teachers of the law, and almost disowned by his parents, he was left to begin life long after he had become apparently a confirmed and hopeless adult. He had never seen the light, had never looked up and seen his mother's smile when, as a babe, he lay at her breast, had soon begun to feel that those who gave him birth rather looked upon him as a sign of God's displeasure than otherwise. Until a few hours ago he sat and walked aimlessly

as one in the world, yet having little part in its work. Jesus had found him and shewn forth the works of God in him. The born-blind now saw; wondering but not aimless he felt about the streets for a friend, a teacher, a Saviour; and none dare come near to help him. He was seeking a Saviour when Jesus met him again, and drew out from him this answer—"Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him."

Like this poor man, we all may say,

"Weary of earth, and laden with my sin, I look at Heaven, and long to enter in, But there no evil thing may find a home."

When conviction of our unworthiness comes, when we feel how empty have been all the promises of this world, when worn and buffeted, and scourged for our sins, we cry out, the infinite glory of heaven, the cleanness of the Home Life, the purity of the moral and spiritual atmosphere, the rightness of the Eternal, unbending Law, terrify us.

"There no evil thing may find a home."

"There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's Book of Life."

Alas!

"So vile am I, how dare I hope to stand
In the pure glory of that holy land
Before the pure whiteness of that Throne appear."

These are the voices of our awakened conscience, the fears of a conscious guilt. We dare not hope in God; and yet we need a helper. We must find a deliverer, for we know that the wrath of God, the lash of our own iniquity, the remorse of our own kindling spirit, are upon us with their terrible penalties. We pray, though with fear and trembling.

". . . Fast falls the eventide,
The darkness deepens; Lord with me abide;
When other helpers fail; and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me."

"Other Refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on thee,
Leave, ah, leave me not alone,
Still support and comfort me."

Only God can help us! Will He? At our wit's end, and in the delirium of our soul fever, we cry to Him, and we have an instinctive hope.

"Yet, I hear a voice that bids me, Come.
Yet there are Hands stretched out to draw me near.
The while I fain would tread the heavenly way,
Evil is ever with me day by day;
Yet on mine ears the gracious tidings fall,
Repent, confess, thou shalt be loosed from all."

As the cry of the tiniest babe in pain, who pleads with circumstances, and bespeaks the compassion he has yet not learned to know, so Man rolls upon His Redeemer the burden that is too heavy for his own shoulders, and trusts God as the drowning man trusts the hard rock or bough his hand, taught by instinct and experience, has seized.

How true to life was the question, the plea of this forsaken man! Who is He, Lord that I might believe? And human trust was not beshamed. The cry of need was honoured in Divine grace. "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it," says God. This man was hungering

for the bread, thirsting for the water of life, and He opened his mouth as the young lions and the ravens whom God feeds, and he was fed with heavenly food.

There are some perhaps here now who are convinced of their sins, and longing for a Saviour. "What shall I do to be saved," is their constant wonder. They see their children, their kindred, their nearest and dearest kneel before the 'Table of the Lord' and they dare not join them. 'Unclean!' 'Unclean!' their heart cries out each time of the Celebration. The promises and gracious words of Jesus enter them as stabs, as sharp penetrating pains, and the agony of their sinful heart is more than they can endure. They fear God, as the devils fear and tremble, and they are afraid to come home.

To the people Christ said, and to you he says, "For judgment am I come into the world that they which see not might see." And, surely, He is willing to save you, for He came to 'call the Sinners to repentance,' and to de-

liver the "prisoner bound in affliction and iron." Do not be discouraged. He will cast out no man who needs him; He will freely heal all who come to him diseased and blind with pain. Only trust Him, and you will be surprised to find how soon your dread will disappear from your mental horizon.

"It is the voice of Jesus that I hear,
His are the Hands stretched out to draw me near,
And His the Blood that can for all atone,
And set me faultless there before the Throne."

Come to Jesus, for He will receive you.

"I heard the Voice of Jesus say,
I am this dark world's Light,
Look unto Me, thy morn shall rise,
And all Thy Day be bright."

Could you but look to Jesus as so many have done and sing with them

"I looked to Jesus, and I found In Him my Star, my Sun, And in that Light of Life I'll walk Till travelling days are done."

And what do you consider the scope of Christ's salvation? Is it only escape from the

punishment of Sin. Do not deceive yourselves. Sin is always punished; it ever brings pain. And when you come to Christ and most join in the work of His Church, you have most pain as you think of the hurt you have inflicted in the past upon God and His Children. The *sting* of pain is gone, but pain will ever be present.

The Saviour Christ would become, is the deliverer from the power of sin in the present. The gates of Hell can receive no soul whom Christ has delivered from the power of sin here. Religion is not a mere escape from future punishment; it is a change from death unto life here, and in all our earthly transactions.

See, what a Saviour He was to the Disciples! How He chastened St. Peter's spirit, and nerved the clinging love of St. John, and chased away the doubts of St. Thomas. And how He humbled, later, the proud self-righteous Saul, and made Him his prisoner at the court of the cruel Nero! He not only took from them the fear of the judgment after death, but he made those who once fled in the moment of

the Betrayal, firm, and bold in the presence of tyrants, and confident in the ultimate victory of Truth.

How He made an enlightened Rome sicken in the presence of murder and brutishness in the arena, and turned their hearts away from the vile earth gods they worshipped with such disgusting rites, and heaped contempt upon princes by the apparently insignificant army which, with spiritual weapons, wound its way from the Catacomb Churches to the public places where iniquity for so many centuries had been honoured! The Saviour comes to show us His Highway of Life, and to help us to walk in it. He came to teach us that mighty Love which fulfils the Law, that active practical harmony of life which accords with the Eternal Doctrine of an everlasting truth. When He saves, a man immediately cries out, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" There is always something flavouring of the superficial when we are willing to enjoy the means of grace, but try very little to provide them for

others. Salvation makes us think the thoughts of Christ who is within us; and that produces a desire, ever increasing, to extend His kingdom everywhere. We see our poor children with chilblained toes and shivering under-fed frames, struggling against fearful odds in the schoolroom, and we want to warm them and improve the conditions under which they start upon life. We see pauperism rampant, increasing, dangerous, and burn to so legislate and administer the law that this unnatural fault may no longer hinder the coming of the age of God's kingdom. We hear of wars and rumours of wars, and not only pray for peace, but join our voice to those who discourage strife and turmoil and jealousies which produce suspicion and distrust between sister nations, and between varying interests in our own country. Instead of Christendom being a house divided against itself, the Saviour will make us brethren and helpers, and builders of future glories which shall accrue to the labours we now inaugurate. O that men would understand how wide and

free and complete is the Salvation of our God.

"O great Absolver, grant my soul may wear,
The lowliest garb of penitence and prayer,
That in the Father's courts, my glorious dress
May be the garment of *Thy righteousness*.
Nought can I bring, dear Lord, for all I owe,
Yet let my full heart what it can bestow.
Like Mary's gift, let my devotion prove,
Forgiven greatly how I greatly love."

And He shall lead His flock like a Shepherd. Quietly, but evidently, our growth shall proceed and our grace shall be manifested, Divine and Christian. Long before we reach Golgotha, we shall hear the sweet melody of the song of the Redeemed, calling us to highest witness and holiest faith. The way may be dark, but there is light from the Holy Saviour who shall go before. And when we pass through the floods, His voice will cheer, and His arm beneath our's will bear us valiantly against the rush of destruction. And when the influences of materialism seem most charged with hope, and from end to end of the world they muster

mighty armies to attack the Christian position, a Banner shall be lifted up flaming with a light before which sin and death and pain shall hide ashamed. And in place of the War Cry of Armageddon shall arise the endless Alleluia; and for the moan of the wounded there shall be a song of Moses and of the Lamb. The clouds shall be the chariots of the Lord God of Sabbaoth, and the firmament shall ring with the acclaim of those about the Throne. The bondage of the Saints shall be broken, and free men shall draw near to God with joy and thanksgiving, yea, a never ending 'Jubilate' shall fill the Courts of Heaven and Earth. Then we shall realize fully what Christ's Salvation means; for then "shall we know even as we are known."

"The strife will not be long—
This day the noise of battle
The next the Victor's song!
To him that overcometh,
A crown of life shall be,
He with the King of Glory,
Shall reign eternally."

SERMON XXX.

"Uhole=hearted Surrender."

I. St. John I., 7.

"But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the Blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin."

PECISION is a most difficult stage to reach for the deep thinker; and it is only the superficial, the shallow, who can easily say, "I will," "I will not." He who, like chaff, is blown in every or any direction as the wind eddy may guide him, is "unstable as water, and shall not excel." We often meet with these creatures of impulse; they are seen to flit hither and thither, feeding often upon mere sensationalism, and are no deeper spiritually than if they had never taken a first draught of the water of life. Intoxicated with first one and then another doctrine, they live in one sense eternally at

high pressure, and in a truer sense the directing energy being absent, all their vitalities run wild; and there is no stamina in them, and no central principle of their life. Like Israel of Ahab's day, they will declare for the Lord one day, and the next are ready to persecute His prophets!

It is the strong current of evil, the overwhelming desire for a carnal life, which finds decision to reverse all energy almost insuperable, but which yet makes the grandest of all character when truly converted to God. Hence there is joy in the presence of the Angels of God over one real sinner more than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance. And when the headstrong Saul prayed in that house at Damascus, there was an influence felt both in Heaven and on Earth, in that "he which persecuted all of that way" was now openly maintaining that Jesus is the Christ. So when the wild, wicked Augustine was given to Monica's prayer, a light was set up from which hundreds of thousands of torches have been kindled. In all these cases Decision

was a hard process so far as the subject of conversion was concerned. Saul kicked against the goad. Augustine tried hard to kill the thought of a Righteousness insulted. But at last the Rubicon was crossed, and the War of God begun in their lives. This decision is determined and is complete. Surrender after a long struggle is *perfect* surrender, and it is just this final confession of need and final coming to Christ which predetermines the strong salvation which they are able to bring to mankind,

"Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy Blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bid'st me come to Thee.
O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am, though tossed about
With many a conflict, many a doubt;
Fighting and fears, within, without.
O Lamb of God, I come."

These are nothing now to the determined soul. He has found the pass-word of the city guard. To him that knocketh it shall be opened, and he knocks. His need is abject: he has no friend save One, and gates and bars divide

them. He knocks, and cries out upon the Name of the Lord. Jesus, Son of David, have mercy upon me!

"Jesus, as I am, poor, wretched, blind; Sight, riches, healing of the mind,
Yea, all I need, in Thee to find.
O Lamb of God, I come."

It was in this way that *Jacob* wrestled with the Angel for a blessing, and became *Israel*. So the Disciples cried to God, and at Pentecost the Comforter came down; and so the brethren prayed for the imprisoned S. Peter, when the doors were open for his escape.

Many are turned away because they lack whole-heartedness in their prayer and complete trust in their faith. They want light, but only under a bushel. They implore salvation, but hamper the Spirit of God with conditions. The Sun of Righteousness seems to them a mistake. Each man should have a darklantern, which he could open or not as he found it convenient. Nothing short of a broken and contrite spirit will be acceptable

to the Bishop of our salvation; for only when we place ourselves unreservedly in His hands, can He make us fit for His Kingdom. Secret Christianity is an insult to Christ, a reserved surrender is unbelief, and prohibits our restoration to health of spirit. We come, not for either creature comforts here, nor heavenly joys in the hereafter, but for "healing of mind," without which we can neither see, nor enjoy God.

And if we walk in the light we shall enter into spiritual fellowship, and the Blood of the Son of God shall cleanse us from all sin. This is just the word of all others which defines the work of the Spirit—'Cleanse.' The Blood of Jesus will *cleanse* us from all sin!

"Just as I am, Thou wilt receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve,
Because Thy promise I believe.
O Lamb of God, I come."

It is sin which spoils this world, and robs the fair earth of its glory. It is sin that causes wounds of shame, and blights a life of promise:

Sin which strips the garments of praise from our limbs, and hangs upon our shoulders the sackcloth and rags of sadness and remorse. How true the story of Eden is in all our own experience. Joy, peace, mutual trust, growth, work, dominion, security, until the forbidden fruit is eaten; and then comes shame, doubt, fear, flight, exclusion and exile, labour, sorrow, murder, blasphemy, darkness, despair! Now Christ in our spirits will cleanse us from all sin. Not wash out only the stain of former guilt, but take away from us the desire for those pleasures in which once we took such delight. By the cleansing of our nature He makes man anew. The carnal gives place to the spiritual, and the desire of man to the joy of the Holy Ghost. And this salvation of our nature is possible through faith. Works never come without faith, and we cannot be saved without we trust in the wisdom and power of the Son of God.

The schoolboy, by faith in his teacher, attacks the problems placed before him, and the little child, by faith in his mother, learns to

pronounce, and to walk, and to take his part in all that is going on. The business man, by faith in certain principles and observation of certain phenomena, guards himself from loss, and lays the foundation of success. Nothing is done without faith. Without faith in the true, we cannot disabuse our minds of the false; and without a confidence in the future, we are incapable of a concentration of mind upon the solution of the difficult problem of the present. Many speak as if the demand of Christ were an appeal to credulity, a new confidence wanted in order to subjugate man. This, you remember, is just what the Tempter said to Eve in Paradise. In reality it is not new at all, in that God asks that men shall just do in the religious world what they have always done in the secular affairs of life, viz., live as they believe, and believe that they may live.

Do you believe the promise? Do you come to live in the light of that promise? If so, my brother, you need not fear any opposition, any adverse condition, any combination of evil

influences, for God will assuredly cleanse you and make you whole.

Do you want to be made whole? Remember, ability brings increased responsibility; and a strict account will be required of your stewardship. Some may feel that God has work for them in the slum, He may call you to work in the Zenana, or in distant China? or in the home of squalor? or the den of vice? Perhaps any of these; but certainly you will have to be true to Him in your home, among those with whom you have sinned and who can watch your every feeling or thought from the moment of inception to its translation into action. Are you ready? He will give us—

"Sight, riches, healing of the mind."

He will—

"Welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve."

He will freely give you all things "with persecutions." Are you prepared for the travail?

And yet no half service will satisfy Him.

We must be wholly His. "No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God." Have you joys you are unwilling to give up for Him? Do your heart's turn back to the fleshpots of the house of bondage? Do you come to the church of Christ on the understanding that for your sake its gates shall be ever open for you to leave and come back, whenever you desire to rest, skulking in the haunts of shame? If this is so, you cannot be His disciples, He will not call you apostles, nor trust you as members of His church. But, O my brethren, look away from the cross you refuse to bear, to the "green hill far away." Watch His agony-the just dying for the unjust, the righteous for sinners. It is said that in the "travail of His soul, He was satisfied." Are you of the seed in whom "He shall prolong His days," and in whom "the pleasure of your Lord shall prosper?" If not, what is your brighter hope?

Some look for the freedom of the adult, and as adults for the maturity of complete manhood

in its prime, and then for the competency of age and honour; and after this, even if attainable —what? What? What is your ambition?—if not to follow Christ and help to lift up fallen humanity, and soothe pain, and illumine shadowland, and glorify your Creator-Redeemer. If you neglect so great salvation, how can ye escape?

What higher ambition can appeal to youth, or maturity, or age, than the service of the church of Christ, in business, in our healing moral agencies, in our missions to the poor and wretched, in alleviating pain, and lightening grief? Can there be anything under heaven so glorious and sweet and blissful as this, "to be Christ's."

"Just as I am, Thy love unknown,
Hath broken every barrier down,
Now to be Thine, yea Thine alone,
O Lamb of God, I come."

Yes, Christ's alone in joy, and rest, and hope, and ambition, Christ's in nature, clean and

seemly in all our deeds, Christ's now and for evermore.

"Just as I am, of that free love,

The breadth, length, depth, and height to prove,

Here for a season, then above,

O Lamb of God, I come."

SERMON XXXI.

"The Fountain of Bealth."

PSALM LI., 7.

"Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

DAVID was very conscious of his sin and shame, and of the natural taint which now and again had shewn itself in the moments of his leisure or anger. Although a man after God's own heart, and the sweet singer of Israel, there were flaws and faults which he could not always leave out of account, and which often led him from excess to sin.

But, notwithstanding his frequent falls, his repentance was real and converting to the soul. His sense of justice, and confidence in the wisdom of the All-Father, ever brought him back when he wandered off the highway of life and safety.

On this occasion he had been inexpressibly mean and hateful in his own sight; he had not only wronged two faithful subjects, but had degraded and humbled himself before God and his own judgment. All his confidence in his own honour, his pride of royal rank, his enthusiastic devotion for the glory of God at any price, were proved unable to keep him from falling; and, conscious that his many sins were traceable to the same moral weakness, he cried out for the pity of God. He had wronged Uriah deeply; but rightly he acknowledges that he had even more dishonoured God. Trusted with the power of manhood, educated in minstrelsy and in the art of leadership, specially preserved from evil which would ensuare his steps, and chosen as a king and a religious leader to set an example to his subjects, he fell and shewed his unworthiness, and brought discredit upon the God he served. Said he, "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight." Alas! how many are, like David, bound to confess that in a variety of ways we

have done evil which shall put the Redeemer to an open shame. We may not yield as the great King of Israel did, but we know that all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. St. John says, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us," and a truer word was never spoken. When we offer our humble confession to Almighty God every Sabbath or week-day service, this comes home to us,—that we have not only committed sin, but have omitted righteous deed and word so frequently, that, like the King of Israel, we humble ourselves before God and pray for His deliverance. "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin." "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."

And generations after generations of men who come to God in this spirit, have learned in their abasement that

"There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Emmanuel's veins,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains."

All ranks, from the proud patrician who prepared for baptism in the Catacomb Church, to the humble fisherman of Galilee who cried, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord," and the publican who smote upon his breast, saying, "Lord be merciful to me, a sinner," all who turn toward the Almighty Goodness are humiliated by their sin; and all cry out for the healing fountain.

"The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day;
And there may I, as vile as he,
Wash all my sins away."

And so long as there are sins to wash away, and iniquity to purge from our nature, so long the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ will cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

"Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till the whole ransomed Church of God
Be saved to sin no more."

Have you come to Christ, weary, sin-stricken soul? He can give you peace, and renew your

youth, and breathe a new spirit into your life. He can save you from your enemy, and deliver you from your oppressor. Have you knelt by His side, the pierced side He endured for your sin? Have you placed your hand in His, the hands marked with the print of the nails? Have you beheld the crown of glory, a crown of thorns upon His head? "He could not do many mighty works in Capernaum because of their unbelief." Are you tying His hand from your salvation? Put your trust in Christ, and no moral degradation, no ingrain of selfishness, no fear of man nor of principality, nor of any earthly domination, shall separate you from His love. Come and confess, and trust Him just now. Do not wait to try other means, come He never yet turned penitent away; never yet proved insufficient for salvation to any who believed and put their trust in Him.

And when we have been healed, we must not be ashamed to acknowledge the Healer, and to bring others to His fountain of health.

And the true Christian is not. We are ready

to thank God for every imaginable material blessing vouchsafed, and to recognise, even before our friends, our indebtedness for all His gifts; but we seem to shrink from the declaration of what Christ has done for us in the cleansing away of our sins. Why is this? Are we ashamed of ever having needed God's help, His forgiveness, His sanctification? This ought not to be! He was not ashamed to wear the thorny diadem, the red robe of mockery, the reed of sham royalty! He did not shrink from the slave's death they condemned Him to die, and the mocking inscription which insulted both Him and the Jewish nation. He did not avoid the laying down of His life—under such inglorious conditions that even some of His disciples trembled in their faint hope, as they went down to Emmaus.

"Ashamed of Jesus? Can it be?

A mortal man ashamed of Thee?"

Have we reason to be ashamed of confessing the mighty power of God in Christ Jesus.

Shall we be put to shame by the poor

demented man out of whom Jesus cast a legion of devils, or by the poor sinner who washed the Saviour's feet with her tears and wiped them dry with the hair of her head? Shall we, in our age be afraid to confess nobly and boldly what Christ is in our life. Loud profession may often be a sham, but confession is nevertheless a duty which we should be ashamed to neglect. Can we not sing praises and glorify God when a great miracle makes all things new for us.

"E'er since by faith I saw the stream,

Thy flowing wounds supply,

Redeeming love has been my theme,

And shall be till I die.

"Then in a nobler, sweeter song,
I'll sing Thy power to save,
When this poor lisping, stammering tongue,
Lies silent in the grave."

And heroic deeds inspired by the Spirit of Christ are the burden of the song.

When the great company of the martyrs and apostles and teachers of the faith join in the

endless "Alleluia," they will use no arbitrary form, but as they have seen and felt, so they shall declare. *They* shall not recapitulate the various triumphs of the faith, for all that is well known of yonder; but in the flood of memories, and in the abundant harvest, and in the glad smile of "Welcome Home," the ascription of praise will become the most natural utterance of the lips and heart.

Are you doing anything to prepare for this glad song? Are you going into highways and hedges compelling the troubled and poor and sin-sick, to come in to the supper of the Lamb? Are you persuading men of the love and power of God as manifest in Jesus the Lord?

All our plans should be laid with this object in view. Even the exultation of the joyous anthem must be made to produce the sob of the contrite sinner returning from the error of his way, and the system of our business establishments must be arranged to prevent the fall or discouragement of one of God's little ones. We have no right to leave our feebler brother to

shift for himself, and we are, as Christians, keepers of our brother's way, and shall have as strict account to give of our care for them as of our care for our own good.

If this were more seriously realised, there were fewer friendless waifs, less flotsam and jetsam driven to and fro, a smaller proportion going under year by year, of all the toiling millions.

Our Sunday classes would maintain their full complement of learners, and would send out a nobler staff of workers into the vineyard. Passion cannot last unless the fire be fed perpetually with wisdom and work. Froth is not power, and emotionalism is not spiritual life. If we would sing the noble song, we must lead the noble life; if we would feel the sweetness of heaven, our lives must be trained by the music of a heart's gratitude for mercies vouch-safed to us and all mankind. Then and not till then, shall we know whiteness—the whiteness of snow, the cleanness of the purity of the Spirit of Christ.

Then with the golden harp-

"Strung and tuned for endless years, And formed by power divine."

The deep sounding harmonies of the heavenly chorus shall wake our hearts to their fullest life, their grandest effort, their most glorious victories!

SERMON XXXII.

"A Refreshing Rest."

PSALM XXXVII., 7.

"Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him."

HOW calmly little children will wait through tumult, and riot, and tempest, if only a strong parental arm encircles, and a mighty hand fights for them! The rumbling thunder, the flashing lightning, the rushing, howling storm, the splash and roar of the waves, the darkness of death—all these are rendered innocuous if only the father be there and stand unmoved. It is just this which makes us stand still and see the salvation of our God. We, however, have no fear, no misgiving as to the future prospect of the kingdom, and we know that God is the foundation of all things eternal. And it is well!

There comes a time when all human theories break down, when the Jordan overflows all its banks, when the earth rampart is undermined and carried away, when the friends we trusted are cold, or oppose our purpose, when every plan we had made proves faulty, or to be fatally imperfect. We need a strong helper, and turn to the Eternal.

"Abide with me," we say.

"Abide with me, fast falls the eventide,
The darkness deepens, Lord, with me abide;
When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O, abide with me."

Here we find our peace, our best, eternal hope; the Helper that cannot fail; the Comfort that shall never depart from us.

"Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day,
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away;
Change and decay in all around I see,
O Thou, who changest not, abide with me."

How we rest in soul as we think of the mighty arms of love beneath us! As little children, wearied with the unsatisfactory day's

play and work, recline against their home maker, and retreat from worry and fear beneath the maternal wing, so we find peace that passeth understanding in the certain security of the allencircling guardiance of God. In the still night we look upon the heavenly bodies, which in all the ages cease not to pursue their wonted course, acting and re-acting upon each other so systematically that the solar systems of every extent preserve their wished-for relations through all the aeons of time. When we think that the great and vast earth is a tiny planet compared with these dots and sparkles of light. What an almighty force is God! What a condescension of person is involved in His attitude towards, and interest in, mankind! "What is man that Thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that Thou visitest him?"

And yet in this Abiding Might, in this vast Origination of Life, in this Majesty of Wisdom do we put our trust! And when all else fails to satisfy, to help, to inspire, to give us strength, we turn in towards the Father-Creator, and cry-

- "Abide with me, fast falls the eventide."
- "Thou that changest not abide with me."
- "Help of the helpless, O abide with me."

In dens and caves of the earth, in mountain solitudes and moorland wastes, and in the snare of the persecutor, the abiding strength and love of God have hallowed pain, sweetened the waters of Marah, have raised up a sheltering gourd in the burning sun's blaze, robbed death of its sting, and filled the sufferer with a spirit of rest and resignation. To have the sweet consciousness of the supporting might of God Almighty, to know that although the mountains shake and heavens be moved, Zion is founded upon the immoveable and impregnable! What a sense of peace it diffuses through our nature!

And we need this confidence, this faith in the "Rock that is higher than we are."

The Christian sings daily—

"I need Thy presence every passing hour,
What but Thy grace can foil the tempter's power?
Who, like Thyself, my guide and stay can be."

In the petty worries of business, in the consideration of duties forced upon us, in the decisions we are called to arrive at regarding wise and foolish, good and evil, godly and ungodly in the affairs of our daily life, who, like God, our guide and stay can be? Many think this an intrusion of the Divine into the realm of the secular. "We ought not to trouble God with what we can put right ourselves." Is it likely that this should seem natural even to earthly fathers and mothers? A very little bruise, or nettlesting, or fright, will send our little ones rushing to our arms; and our arms are open for them. If earthly parents are so interested, can we imagine our Heavenly Father caring nothing when men trust him little in the affairs of life? It is in the small matters of our concern that the Spirit's influence first begins to tell; and as the life depends upon the successful treatment of an apparently insignificant illness in the majority of cases, so the mighty deed is shewn forth from the faithfulness in that which is least.

We cannot do without God in the daily round

of duties, however monotonous or mechanical they may be in nature, and however we may leave to automatic action our work and our word. No doubt Judas Iscariot had pilfered long before he was a common thief, and was a thief long before he betrayed his Lord. It is just at the parting of the ways that Christ can help us best, and in the hour of germination that His shelter is most appreciated.

What is conscience but the voice of Jesus, which should be our guide and stay; and how soon a dulled conscience produces its cursed brood of vacillation, weakness and, ultimately, sin!

"Who, like Thyself, my guide and stay can be? Through cloud and sunshine, O abide with me."

And how the presence of Christ transforms our life and experience! What a faith is ours when our Captain of Salvation is by us!

"I fear no foe with Thee at hand to bless, Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness."

Companionship on earth will soften, to an untold extent, the asperities of our lot. Where

alone, and with no help of sympathy, we face the enemy's array, we have all the brunt to bear of the shock, and, additional to this, the anxiety of fear and doubt as to the way we shall take. But even with a companion as inexperienced as ourselves, the way seems clearer, and misfortune scarcely looks the same for the peaceful voice of encouraging trust. And when the companion is One tried in all points like ourselves, who has trodden every foot of the path, and suffered every pain of travail, and every trial of faith, our religion is a sure thing, pregnant alike with hope and joy to all who may be on pilgrimage. The darkest life is lit up by the beauty of His countenance, and the land of shadows is full of the glints of glory, which are cast down from the mountain of vision.

"Where is Death's sting? where grave thy victory?

Sin is the sting of death, and the victory of the grave. But with the abiding Christ there is, can be, no sin. Where, then, is the sting of death? Death is always hard enough to bear

without it being poisoned by any of the progeny of sin. However bright the home of the saints, however peaceful the Hereafter, however we long for rest, there are longings nearly equally forceful. The wrench of kindred hearts, the interrupted work, the broken engagements, the conscious shortcoming of our own life and spiritual attainment. All these make the last act in mortal life full of unrest and pain. To see the bud and not pluck the blossom, to train and bind up the fruit and not eat thereof, to build up a house for habitation and not dwell in it, to knit closely, stronger and stronger bonds of love and interest, and see them all severed by inexorable death! It is hard, even for many a worn, weary, and wasted one, to die. How much harder is it to surrender all the possibility of youth, strength, and capacity!

But we can bear it if there be no remorse gnawing at our vitals, no injustice uncorrected, no hatred burning out of our heart, all desire for the rest that remaineth.

With Christ in our heart,

"Where is Death's sting? where grave thy victory?
I triumph still, if Thou abide with me."

Here is our strength, the virtue of the Holy Cross.

The dark valley is no longer even gloomy if He be there; and though the heavens refuse to shine on Calvary, the Cross beams forth the Love of the Father and the Light of the World.

"Hold Thou Thy Cross before my closing eyes."

Here is our only hope. If Christ be not risen then we are dead, dead in trespasses and sins. But Christ is risen, through the Cross triumphant; and now the Cross, upon which Jesus made the great sacrifice, is our comfort in sadness, and our salvation in death's agonies. As our thoughts pass from transitory things, and our eyes are closed from the forms we loved so well, we want to look off to Jesus, to the Cross so strangely dear to the Church. Let this be the last thought, this the representation, the summing-up of all our struggles.

"Hold Thou Thy Cross before our closing eyes."

And as the frail bark is loosed from its

emile marings and insistence from all the and experience of this life on the Divine Pilot ment as and the beavenly instead frav as into the light of exercising.

"Some prompt the some, and point he is the street."

-at the e use what Got as the Ma will figure all earth cours and the miss which mismire the plantage scener of the land if perfect teach. He will shope furth and out to fight for all trembing incertain information ere fun un rente ferm and me sev THE AND LET PRESURE AND FORMS DOCIES of the name and stall resting themselves out the state we green as in the life new deals. nev amplitude nev negret which the place of al that was some and voter and task " Hearten's morning treated and terms tem stadows fee " and teltre we have forgitten the idina imi ser i ne staning de dear her da ere-notesne homines o latite tem the lateral is that here is hereafter we aren wisely for the Divine Presence and

support. To live or to die is unsafe apart from God.

"Abide with me from morn till eve, For without Thee I cannot live. Abide with me when night is nigh, For without Thee I dare not die."

"In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me."

SERMON XXXIII.

"3mmanuel!"

Joshua I., 17.

"According as we hearkened unto Moses in all things, so will we hearken unto thee: only the Lord thy God be with thee, as He was with Moses."

A ROUND Joshua stood the elders of Israel; the men who had led their families to war with the Amalekites, and had helped Moses to judge in the lesser cases of dispute which arose among the men of that mighty host of God's people.

These were not the heads who came out of Egypt, who were in fear as the chariot wheels of Pharaoh ground the earth with a harsh roar and deep rumble, who murmured at Meribah, who turned faint as the spies reported the sons of Anak, and the strong cities of Canaan, of Heth, and of the Hivites. These had known

bondage, some of them, but only as child's memories out of the distant past did they see the gods of Egypt, the heavy pageant of her worships, and the brute strength of her empire. The harsh and restrictive policy, adopted against Israel, was before their time in inception, and they only remembered the lash of the taskmasters, the burden they used to faint under, the ceaseless labour which was their lot. Nearer were the plaguing of the Egyptians, the passage of the Red Sea, the destruction of Pharaoh's host, and the many events which proved the Real Presence, of which the pillar of fire and cloud was the emblem ever before their eyes.

And in their time they had seen human instruments discarded, man-made gods cast down, a law given by the disposition of angels, a heavenly food spread by Divine hands upon the earth, the mighty cities beyond Jordan subjected to the ill-armed pilgrims, and the whole of the unsubjected kingdoms in deadly fear of their own destruction. We read in the

Word that the people served God so long as Joshua, and the elders who outlived Joshua, survived to tell them of God's ways in Israel; and the reason was just that these elders had found that God was able to be all things in the campaign, even though the best generals were slain, the wisest guides discredited in their calling, and Moses left in the hills beyond Jordan.

A God-forsaken nation might be desperate in her struggle for existence; victory was not to the mighty and the great, but belonged to the people who could truly say, "Immanuel," "God with us."

Joshua had already shewn great ability, had displayed great aptitude for the office of leader. Moses had indicated, in many ways, the advisability of electing the son of Nun as his successor in the leadership. He had evidently had opportunities of learning the wisdom of the age, which fell to the lot of very few. He was in himself a true man, not afraid to find himself in a minority so long as the minority was in the

right. He and Caleb alone were found courageous among the spies whom Moses sent out. Everything seemed to point out Joshua as the Governor-General of Israel. But the elders imposed a condition, without which even he must not be elected. God must be with him!

They were prepared to shew him the respect they had rendered Moses, they would obey him blindly as they had obeyed the deceased leader, they would live with him, die with him, do anything for him, *only* "God were with him."

And splendidly did the Lord of Sabbaoth honour the position taken up by these excellent men! Although the greatest of the conferacy age united against the victorious army, the retreating kings strewed the plains with heaps of their dead, and the Jordan ran red with their blood. They who had come out to punish the invading tribes of slaves, with loud boasts, and in splendid condition, hurried into the back gates of the fenced cities by twos and threes; and soon all the open country was in the hands

of the people of God, of the nation who could truly say, "Immanuel." God led them. He told them when to go up to battle, and when to stand still; and the result of it was courage, and patriotism, and discipline, and the maximum of force brought to bear against the foe.

One product of this discipline was a particular reliance on God's judgment. We often believe that, in the main, God knows best, but that in particular details we can amend His rule! Israel learned to trust Him with everything! Have we reached this? When you have bought shares in a particular company, whose work you know of with all the results likely to accrue from its operations, can you cry, "Immanuel?" When you have finished the day's business, and remember your treatment of each man or woman with whom you have had transactions, the extent to which the golden rule has been your standard, can you always feel a joy come over your soul, as you hear the cry, "Immanuel?" Are you always satisfied that God has helped you in your bargains,

and that you have been partners with Him in all your affairs? Perhaps you dare to transgress as Achan trespassed, and modify the law of obedience to suit your proclivities. Can you then come to the congregation of Israel and shout, "Immanuel?" Has God led you in all your various electoral campaigns, municipal, parliamentary, and other? Have you first asked Him what is right, and lifted His banner, or have you asked what would pay, and followed the banner of avarice?

God does not care for abject servility, even in *His* service; but He does want us to be waiting upon Him for every sign of His will, and desires a cheerful surrender of *our* will, as of the unreliable and often foolish, to a Will that is *always* the outcome of love and judgment.

The elders were on the eve of a great struggle, where the slightest slip might, as it often did, cause bitter wailing in the homes of the ingloriously dead. They needed one whom they could trust, even when they could not follow the lead of His mind. This was not

Joshua—only the Ancient of Days can inspire such implicit trust as this, and they were determined that they would follow none other. We are in the midst of foes, we are in danger of our life, we must have a guide we can place entire confidence in, under every circumstance. Only Christ, our Holy Immanuel, can supply our need.

"Lead kindly light, amid the encircling gloom,

Lead Thou me on.

The night is dark, and I am far from home,

Lead Thou me on.

Keep Thou my feet, I do not ask to see

The distant scene, one step enough for me."

What a good thing it is for us when we can leave the future so in the hands of God! It is a merciful provision of God that our eyes are so darkened, so shaded that we cannot see the future of our own present act. Man so limits results by his inclination. Man would have no darkness, no winter, no storm and tempest-tossed sea, no cold, and hail, and snow, and biting frost. We hate the gloomy and cloudy dispensations, and would never have an hour of

rest when enjoying, nor an hour of labour when in pain.

God acts not so unwisely, nor does He permit us to do so where He can turn us in the right way. Could we see all the pain of the Christian Endeavour, we should shrink from it, or temporize. God hides it from us because He longs that we may undertake that labour, the very trials of which shall develope in our manhood the seeds of a bright future. Hence, "the way is dark," and the sense of forlornness drives us to our Guide, and the uneven way, and the uncertain land ahead, make us pray,

"Keep Thou my feet, I do not ask to see
The distant scene, one step enough for me."

And we cannot but compare the policy of confidence with that of distrust. The Children of Israel cried for meat, and God gave them quails, and terrible disorders and pestilence. They asked Aaron to make them Elohim to go before them, and he acceded to their request with awful consequences upon their unfaith. Israel's self-confidence involved the national

disaster, and the national shame, just as surely as bad government now, and unjust laws now, and godless legislation now, produce a crop of evils, enough to destroy any people from the face of the earth. And this is equally true of individuals. We remember what follies we were guilty of, what pains we produced by our neglect of the Divine law and will!

"I was not ever thus, nor prayed that Thou
Should'st lead me on;
I loved to choose, and see my path, but now
Lead Thou me on.
I loved the garish day, and spite of feats,
Pride ruled my will; remember not past years."

Here and there we are struck with the note of regret in the Pauline Epistles, and we meet with it in every true Christian's heart. The wasted energy of the hopeless past, the wounds caused which we now can never heal, the loss sustained no riches now make up for, the sin indulged, which, did the blood of Christ make it white as wool, is still a scar in our soul. Alas, for the past years of weakness, of pride, of intrigue, of guilt, of darkness! Our pride lay

at the root of all our misfortunes, our conceit was the bane of our life, our headstrong insistence against the rule of the Gentle Spirit called forth a Nemesis, whom we dread even now.

"Remember not past years."

And yet God will disentangle our life for us, and will strengthen the eternal parts that still remain. The past strength will be rejoined to the chain of our happiness, though the evil be burned out of our nature. And these pasts will be joined to us by our going forward.

As the elders obeyed Joshua when the "Immanuel" banner floated upon the breeze, so we shall obey our Leader, and the freedom enjoyed by us shall return and bring peace to our souls, just as the wars of Canaan restored to a progressive people the Princeship which their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, had enjoyed. And the broken links of past and present He shall weld with His love, and the joys we thought could ne'er return shall be ours once more; for the past good is stored in His

keeping, and will be available when He draws back the veil, and ushers us into the Land of our Home for ever and ever.

"So long Thy power hath blest me, sure it still
Will lead me on,
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till
The night is gone;
And with the morn those angel faces smile,
Which I have loved long since and lost awhile."

SERMON XXXIV.

"The March of the Saints."

PHIL. III., 10.

"That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death."

ST. PAUL does not generally make any complaint as to the cost of his adhesion to Christ and His cross; and yet, probably, few gave more up when the Holy Ghost required open confession. Saul of Tarsus evidently was not only of good family, but of one influential and well-to-do at the least. When he reached Jerusalem, he came to Gamaliel to complete his studies, and here he seems to have come well to the front; for he it was who held authority at the stoning of St. Stephen. After the futile attempt to put out the light at Damascus, he went for

study and preparation into Arabian desolation, and even on his return from thence was sufficiently known to be dreaded by the more timorous of the Christians. It was natural that the change would affect Saul's position terribly. Excommunicated, without doubt, he would be from the family circle, even if the synagogue did not cast him out; and when he passed through the city and state in which he had distinguished himself and his family by his fierce advocacy of the claims of the Jewish religion, we can easily understand that no gentle hospitality, no sweet encouragement, no help of any kind would be rendered up to the altar of human love. An outcast at home, a poor man, who yet was an heir to considerable property; a heretic, who yet was almost ready himself to be accursed that his Israelitish brethren might be saved, Paul had reason for claiming some special consideration at the hands of his God. And yet he would not glory, save in the Cross; he would not boast, save of the great love of his God.

"Yea, doubtless," says he, "and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him."

"O happy band of pilgrims, If onward ye will tread, With Jesus as your fellow, To Jesus as your Head.

O happy if ye labour, As Jesus did for men; O happy if ye hunger, As Jesus hungered then."

- St. Paul had then three desires, and these are the stages of the Christian's journeys.
- I. He sought to be found in Christ. Whatever trouble or opportunity should come, he wanted to be ready for the emergency. He longed to "prepare to meet his God," that when God called him he might make answer at once.

What is it to be found in Christ? The Jews had a sad, yet beautiful, custom in the sending

out of the scape-goat. After the sins of the people were imputatively transferred to him, he was made to wander into the wilderness, carrying with him the reproach and the degradation of Israel. As he gradually receded from the congregation, and became a mere speck on the mountains of the far distance, and then disappeared, a relief was felt, and the people were safe in heart; they were found in the odour of sanctity, in the pureness of sacrifice, and felt secure from all penalty which sin might produce. So the convert, plunging into the ever-open fountain of God's forgiving love, feels that he is safe from the law, and a debtor to the grace of God. He is right in the sight of God. He has observed all rites and ceremonies. has used all ablutions and means of grace, and is clean in the eyes of God, found in Christ. St. Paul yearned to be in this sense wholly found in Christ, ready for all His perfect will, fit for the service of the King.

2. He also wished to know the power of God's resurrection, the power of the Almighty

Spirit making alive the dead in trespasses and sins, stirring up the defaulting and indolent, restoring the penitent, raising the impotent, opening the eyes of the blind, shaking from their lethargy the sluggard and the careless. These forces of His Spirit it was which made man victor over his mortality, and gave the sweet and chaste reward of immortality.

This surely is a worthy wish, which we all should know. We have no right to be satisfied if we can just squeeze into safety; we ought to enter openly and with hosannahs to Christ.

"The cross that Jesus carried,
He carried as your due;
The crown that Jesus weareth,
He weareth it for you."

It is degrading this slavish indolence which makes so many lose their crowns, which unfits so many more for ever bearing the cross they are called to carry.

You would not like your children, whom you have educated and clothed at the cost of many arduous toils and much and rigid self-denial, to

be satisfied with a workhouse maintenance, or bread begged from door to door.

Neither does our Heavenly Father care to see us with no ambition to excel in gifts, to serve our fellows, to grow in grace, to know even as we are known.

And lastly, St. Paul wished to know the fellowship of His sufferings. We sometimes feel exultantly the consciousness of our national supremacy in the counsels of the earth. Far greater the glory of those patient, trusting, determined men, who laid, humanly speaking, the foundations of our might—St. Hilda, Bede, Wilfred, Aidan; their's was a glorious experience. What was passing through Bede's mind when he translated those last few verses upon his death-bed, and rested his soul with a pious 'Nunc dimittis?" They were wise masterbuilders, but they saw ahead the graceful pinnacles and stately towers which should arise from their labours, and they had their reward in knowing the fellowship of the sufferings of lesus.

Why was the Apostle so anxious? Was it not because he sought the precious pearl, the pearl of great price? "The Cross, the Crown."

"The faith by which ye see him,
The hope in which ye yearn,
The love that through all troubles
To Him alone will turn.
The troubles that beset you,
The sorrows ye endure,
The manifold temptations
That death alone can cure."

"What are they but His jewels, Of right celestial worth."

These are the bright ornaments of mankind, the stars which surround the throne, the golden candle-sticks of the sanctuary of man's inner life. And the world takes more notice of ornaments than it does of arguments ever so subtle and convincing.

Payment here, even in the credence of the world, goes largely by fruits which can be made manifest. Such object-lessons as the prosperity of a Christian nation, the success of a Christian policy, the effect of Christian training, the

hospital, the refuge, the humanising of the law, the enfranchisement of the serf, the freeing of slave labour at a people's cost; these are what people take notice of. You may, with mathematical precision, demonstrate that righteousness exalts a nation; none will believe it very much until they see the nation exalted by righteousness. We must then not forget to let our light shine. If there be light in us, we shall glow before the world, and convince them of the claims of Christ. Men delight in concrete quantities; they are easier to grasp than mere abstractions. When Jesus put out His hand to the leper, and said, "I will, be thou clean," it meant more than all the lectures of the Rabbis regarding the origin, purpose, and development of the dreadful disease.

Alas! That men should so little understand this; for the coming of the Lord is sadly impeded by our persistent disregard of the most simple of all natural laws. And they are more than jewels. They are the means of our salvation.

"What are they but the ladder
Set up to heaven on earth.
O happy band of pilgrims,
Look upward to the skies,
Where such a light affliction
Shall win so great a prize."

Trouble overcome, temptation resisted, war brought to a successful termination, faith which brings forth works of love and help, hope that maketh not ashamed, and is not shamed at *any* time, love which melts the hard heart of the transgressor, power which casts out devils, and fills the world with hope again for many who were lately in darkest despair.

These are the graded road up which we climb from post to post, and strength to strength, until we prevail to overcome that last dread enemy of mortal man. If any have ridden upon a rack and pinion railway, they would see there a good illustration of the gradual ascent of Christian manhood. Sometimes there is no progress apparent, and it seems impossible that we shall ever reach the snow-patched rocks above. Then, again, we rise more rapidly as

the gradient offers less danger, then we stop altogether, and before another tooth of the cogs can force us ahead, the inertia of the carriage must be overcome. But at last the black valley lies below in the shadow, and the snowy peaks surround us, and the sun kisses the mountain tops and lights them with glistening glory, and for many miles we see nothing but green lakes, and browny slopes, and snow and cloud, just as God arranged them.

In our climb we reach ever nearer Him, and taste more of the sweet teaching of the Guide and Guardian of our souls; but there we never see any after-glow, for our Sun never sets. There is no night in heaven, and ever brighter becomes the light as the earth-dimness passes from our eyes.

"Glories upon glories

Hath our God prepared,

By the souls that love Him

One day to be shared;

Eye hath not beheld them,

Ear hath never heard,

Nor of these hath uttered

Thought, or speech, or word.
Forward, marching Eastward,
Where the Heaven is bright,
Till the veil be lifted,
Till our faith be sight."

SERMON XXXV.

"The Secret of Victory!"

ST. LUKE XVII., 5.

"And the Apostles said unto Him, Lord, increase our faith."

THE prayer was a very natural one coming from the Disciples. Christ had asked a hard thing of them; they did not see how, with the light then within them, the way could ever be clear enough. Two strange things had Christ said. He had given them to understand that the little ones were of the first importance, and that goodness would overcome all obstacles and drive out evil. To make the little ones stumble was such a crime, that it were better that the would-be criminal were hanged to a millstone and cast into the sea.

The Disciples were told to forgive, not seven

times, but seventy times seven, in short, were to be as ready to forgive a wrong as a wrong was inflicted often.

These were hard sayings for them. To the monarchist how *could* the weak be of more account than the mighty and warlike? And to the Jew, who claimed the right to *hate* with a bitterness unknown among Western nations, the perpetual 'I forgive' was simply preposterous.

What wonder then that the followers of Jesus shrank from simple obedience, and sought to be prepared for the ordeal of a life they could not live at present! And to us, more anomalies than these, and less easy of explanation, are constantly presented. How strange, for instance, that One who could summon legions of angels to glorify His mission, chose rather to humble Himself to the death of the Cross, that He, who was equal with the Father and one with the Father, should take upon Him the form of poor, helpless babyhood, and wrestle with each difficulty, and overcome each

obstacle, when He, who called a world from naught, could have spoken a word, and changed all things in a moment of time!

How mysterious are the ministry of pain, the record of loss and weakness, the witness of Divine purity in earthern vessels! We often read in the papers of the millions possessed by this or that man, who often either wastes it on expensive tastes, or controls, by subtle influences, the government of a nation; and at the same moment the work-people of his city are herded under unnatural and unhallowed conditions, and subjected to the most deadly temptations that poverty and despair can present to man. It is hard to believe sometimes in the possibility of a spiritual religion which allows an omnipotence to its Deity, which yet can tolerate an iniquity of this kind.

This, in sum, was the chief ground upon which the tempter attacked too consistently the faithful witness of Jesus in the wilderness. We cannot, somehow, distinguish in our judgment between the Divine and the human ideals of goodness; and we often suspect the weakness (as we consider it) which God yet uses as the medium through which He exerts His mightiest influences.

"O for a faith that will not shrink,
Though pressed by many a foe;
That will not tremble on the brink
Of poverty or woe;
That will not murmur nor complain
Beneath the chastening rod,
But in the hour of grief or pain
Can lean upon its God."

A faith independent of condition and surrounding, equally clear in sickness and in health, and equally trustful however we are called to endure affliction. Lord increase our faith.

Now, how was the Disciples' faith increased? Did Christ explain more the manners of His revelation? Did He give more signs to convince them of His determination to keep His promises made to them? I think not. But He did lead their faith for its bases to Himself, as distinguished from His sayings. Hence, in the trouble of the Crucifixion, we find them

perseveringly trusting His promise, because they had learned that He Himself was true. The form of a creed may be modified, or explained in a new sense of fulness, and our faith is shaken, and becomes tremulous in the hour of transition; but Jesus Christ remains ever the same to us "yesterday, to-day, and for ever," and therefore we can endure change, and, through our great faith in Him, even believe that the unlikely which He says is true. And this faith comes out more with each test, and radiates confidence to all we have any relation to. It is

"A faith that shines more bright and clear,
When tempests rage without;
That when in danger knows no fear,
In darkness feels no doubt;
A faith that keeps the narrow way,
Till life's last spark is fled;
And with a pure and heavenly ray
Lights up the dying bed."

It was this faith which won the Great Master's approval when the centurion said, "I am not worthy that Thou shouldest enter under my roof; but speak the word only." This was the faith, too, of the poor Syro-Phenician woman, who begged for the crumbs which fell from the Jewish table, that her daughter might be delivered from her terrible complaint. And it was this faith which made St. Peter cry out, "Lord, save me, or I perish."

Our only safety lies in this faith in a Personal Saviour. Could we trust in Jesus, the Son of God, all the apologies ever written for the Christian faith are for us superfluous. If we believe in Him, we will believe and do all He ever commands. Have we the right faith at all? Are we trusting in Him, or only in something He is reported to have said or done? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, on Himself, and thou shalt be saved.

And how shall our faith be increased? By knowing Him more and better! We have friends whom we remember knowing for many years; we could not have any full confidence in them at first, we might even look suspiciously upon them; but we have seen them under the

fire of temptation, have passed with them through affliction, have observed them in stress of tempest, or burning heat of day, and never knew them flinch in trial or shrink from duty of any kind. By getting to know them better we have learned to increase our faith in them, until we have an almost perfect trust that what is right they will do.

Just in the same way must we increase our faith in Christ. He kept His disciples beside Him for some three years, and shewed them the inner divine nature which was incarnate in the Man of Nazareth, and they learned to come to Him in all their troubles, and to tell Him their worries, great and small, until at last they were ready to run to the sepulchre when the women told them of the risen Christ being no longer there. And one important means for becoming acquainted with Christ is in the study of His word. We know that a large number are quite satisfied that the Scriptures have been duly honoured by the reading of the appointed lessons for the day. Nothing of the kind! We

can only get to understand the Saviour while we "read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest" the truth contained in His Holy Gospels. Study it devoutly and prayerfully, reverently opening every light which will illumine our darkness. All the contemporary events relating to Palestine, every reliable word of the principal men and women of Judæa, and all the information we can obtain of the influences affecting the growth and coming of His kingdom in any way should be gathered together as a background, and then the "Word made flesh" will stand out in clear and distinct lines so plainly that we shall feel able to trust Him even in the cloud of Calvary.

Then we increase our faith by working with Him in the salvation of the world. It is astonishing how soon we are able to trust God when we have stood in Bethesda's porches beside Christ, and helped some impotent man down into the water. Have you ever tried to reclaim some wanderer, along Gospel lines, going into the wolf-infested mountains and

almost compelling the strayed and lost one to return to the home he had left? If so, we can imagine, not only the joy of the Good Shepherd, but also the song of the angels of God. And so we reach the heart and begin to comprehend the love of Christ.

But after all it is God who will increase our faith most of all. Day by day He opens out new and sweet meanings for all that He has said. He it is prepares our way for the experiences which bring us into closer contact with Him, and opens our eyes wide that we may perceive the heavenly vision.

And so that He answers our prayer for more faith, so that He increases our capacity for faith we should not complain when He uses bitter trials and severe tests, in order to draw our affections more toward spiritual verities.

He always has to bring home to us our own ignorance, our own need of salvation; and this to the self-proud man or woman is a trying experience. As He let S. Peter sink for a moment, so far that he thought he was about to

drown, so He often seems to hide His face, and we are plunged in such woe that we think we are God-forsaken, while He is only seeking His opportunity for deliverance. So long as a sinking man is able to struggle for Himself, it is unwise to approach him. Only when hope is lost and exhaustion succeeds, can the deliverer safely come alongside and draw his brother to the land. So long as men think they can by any possibility save themselves, Christ has no power or influence with them. Only when we cry—

"Nothing in my hand I bring, Simply to Thy cross I cling."

Can He find in us the basis of a trust in Him?

When all else fails and we are left helpless at the mercy of our foe, then, and not till then, can He shew us how much we may rely upon Him, how entirely trust His power and will.

And as we learn that Christ satisfies all our need, fulfills all our ideal, and inspires us with life, and breath, and all things," we become

capable of great services, of simple belief in all circumstances, in the all sufficiency of Christ.

"Lord, give me such a faith as this,
And then, whate'er may come
I taste e'en now the hallowed bliss
Of an eternal home."

SERMON XXXVI.

"Talcome Ibome!"

S. MATT. XI., 28.

"Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

HOW terribly the prophecy of Christ has been fulfilled in after ages. The proud city by the cool Sea of Galilee which was exalted unto heaven is cast down to hell, to be covered up, to be forgotten, save in its connection with the work of this Man of Nazareth, and with a few of her greater national sins! Here and there are found fragments of her splendid temples; in heaps of rubbish one discovers the broken vessels her slaves used to bear for their pampered masters.

Roman and Jew vied with each other in the voluptuous richness of their circumstance; a

cold, cynical superciliousness was the keynote of the synagogue worship, as well as of the idolatrous celebrations. "In Capernaum He could not do many mighty works, except that He laid His hands upon a few sick folk and healed them."

All this passed away; the greater the pride and truculence of the citizens, the greater and deeper and more thorough the vengeance of the Roman over-lord; and now the haughty city, and Chorazin, and Bethsaida are mounds of ruins, littered with shattered memorials of former magnificence! So shall we pass away, if we have no more certain tenure than that supplied by worldly power and influence.

And when He had shewn the vanity of all temporal things, the transitory nature of mere physical possession and power, He propounds to them a new way of salvation, wherein a citizenship in an abiding and impregnable city is assured for ever. These have put their trust in alliances, in wealth, in political intrigue, and in wide-spread combinations. Come unto

Me, and I will give you the rest *they* know not, the peace that endures for ever, the life beyond the tomb!

The more objects in life a man has, the more scattered his energies, and the more divided and distracted his affections. Christ would bring men *home* with one ideal, one hope, one aim. None can serve two masters, he *must* favour one and disregard the other. Christ—God—says, "Thou shalt have none other gods beside Me;" and this for our own advantage. One object, one ideal we must have if we would be successful in the spiritual life.

It must have sounded strange, this invitation of Christ. A street in one of the cities of Galilee, and a crowd of all ranks, with a centre in a well-known resident in Galilee. Perhaps some were there who had got work done at Joseph's shop in Nazareth, and who knew St. Mary well. Imagine the picture—the banter, the laughter, the indignation of some well-favoured man or woman of the richer class, the amused curiosity of the Italian soldier who has

stopped on the skirts of the crowd. And yet, even among all these, there are a few who do not make sport of the supposed pretensions of this Nazarene. Some have drunk deeply of the pleasure cup, and have a burning, unslaked thirst; some think the Hebrew prophets must have indicated this time of Israel's lowest abasement, and have heralded such a Saviour; some are beginning to doubt the stability of all human greatness. These listen; some follow; others turn away for the present. To these the invitation is not absurd; for their heart needs home, and of home, and rest, and peace Christ speaks.

Ye sin-sick and sorrowful, come! Alas, how many there were to whom these words appealed. Many had despised the God of their Jewish fathers, and drifted under the influence of strange customs, vile habits, unnatural pleasures. Christ's word reminded them of their days at home, and of the songs of Israel's victories, of her heroes, and of her faith. Some had dis-

honoured their parents by vice and folly, and were cast off by the rigid law of Israel. These sinners came to listen, and some, doubtless, found God more merciful than even offended and disgraced fathers and mothers. Possibly the poor Magdalen, who later showed her penitence at the feet of the Saviour, was just brought to the home-light in this way. Even in the cities of wicked Galilee, the voice from home reached the heart of the sick and weary and burdened souls; and after all, these were they whom Jesus came to bring into the household circle.

"Far, far away, like bells at evening pealing,
The voice of Jesus sounds o'er land and sea;
And laden souls by thousands meekly stealing,
Kind Shepherd turn their weary steps to Thee."

And Christ was not alone. He not only testified Himself, but the works He did, the souls He saved, the hope He re-kindled, the love He displayed, were testimony to the power of His mission. These were the angel-voices, the herald's proclamation, wherever He went.

When we see the Son of Man exalted by the miracles He is every day working, we have much more courage to adopt His methods and forms in salvation. These angels of His that do His pleasure are a constant witness that Christ can give strength to the believer, that He stands by His church which He has bought with His own blood.

"Hark, hark my soul, angelic songs are swelling,
O'er earth's green fields and ocean's wave-beat shore,
How sweet the truth those blessed strains are telling
Of that new life where sin shall be no more."

And we never get out of hearing; at night and by day, at home and abroad, in the busy hum of the town, and the quiet dell and glade of rural life, in the merry pursuit of recreation, and in the sorrowful contemplation of broken idols, and vain ideals, we hear them still. In the awful judgment, and the sweet reward bringing, in the building, and in the pulling down, we have the voice within and the voices on every hand calling us home,

"Angels of Jesus, angels of light, Singing to welcome the pilgrims of the night." And when gloomy shadows fall around us, and the last bird of hope has gone to sleep upon the thick overhanging branches, and each landmark is obscured until we can only tell when we are upon the King's highway by the hard ring beneath our footsteps, even then,

"Onward we go, for still we hear them singing, Come weary souls, for Jesus bids you come, And through the dark, its echoes sweetly ringing, The music of the Gospel leads us home."

None can ever say he is forsaken of God, for "Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge." "There is no place where their voice is not heard"; and the lesson of the voice is Come home, home to God, home through Christ,—the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

And apart from the works of God existent about us, there is another voice, that from beyond the tomb!

There are mothers who once were careless about spiritual matters. They might use all the

sacraments of the Church of Christ, and attend regularly at all her services; but formal, rather than vital, was the relation of the soul to the Redeemer. A voice spoke a beautiful trust from the knee, and little fingers entwined them about the heartstrings. That mother knows more of heaven and of home now, for the same child voice of trust speaks from the courts of the Lord, and the same baby hand seems to soothe the wearied and forlorn heart. Earth is not home now, but heaven, for there is the treasure laid up for the day of the Lord. And all of us have hostages in the Almighty hands. Many a sin have we been preserved from by the bright faces yonder, which we see by faith. Our loved ones are angels now for us; and we see them beckoning us onward when we have nearly given up hope.

Oh! how weary we become at times! And yet we are ashamed to lie down on the way home! How hard is the struggle with tempest and sword! But we cannot tolerate a barrier

between us and our loved ones. And, above all, there is the gracious promise of Jesus, the Lord. He will take us to be with Him! How long it seems to look forward to! Children who lose their dearest mothers and other earthly guardians, what a long waiting there is before they enter into rest and rejoin the lost ones! How long before they see the Redeemer! And yet how we may use that time!

If your parents leave you, as Anglo-Indian parents do leave their children often for years, do you think they will be pleased to find you no wiser, no better, no stronger, no more useful than when they left you?

Even so it is to nerve us to our duty, to call out the best in us, to develope the life now latent, that God often leaves us to fight our battles alone, and yet not alone, for He is with us, and the voices of the redeemed across the river ever encourage us to a grander life, and a fit preparation for the joys of reunion above. And—

"Rest comes at length, though life be long and dreary,
The day must dawn, and darksome night be past

Faith's journey ends in welcome to the weary,
And heaven, the heart's true home, will come at last.
Angels sing on, your faithful watches keeping,
Sing us sweet fragments of the songs above;
Till morning's joy shall end the night of weeping,
And life's long shadows break in cloudless day."

SERMON XXXVII.

"Ulhat shall it be to be there!"

I THESS. IV., 17, 18.

"And so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

oncerning the Resurrection, St. Paul is beautifully simple, and necessarily so, for, of all things taught in the Scriptures, perhaps there is least of certainty regarding the real and full significance of the great change of the rising again of the saints. He clearly proves how the Spirit cannot die, and that the fruits of the Spirit shall remain through all the ruin of mortality. He demonstrates further the absurdity of the death of the sanctified soul of the member of Christ, and finally takes the spirit behind the veil and foretells the joys of the redeemed. Here, the great hindrance to our faith is the veil of the temple

of life. We cannot see into the future: we cannot foresee what the Divine Guide shall call us to endure in the next hour of our day; we cannot read the heart of our brother: we may not know the nature of our God; nor can we see even the proportions of His creation; nor may we judge of the nature of His provision for the wants of His creatures. "O Lord, make bare Thine arm," we cry, "Make us gods to go before us, whose lips we watch moving as they answer us, we often pray. The veil of sense has ever obscured the vision, and disheartened the worshipper and saint. Now, it is necessary for our vision to be limited, our way to be bounded, our path hedged in. When we pass into the 'larger room,' and drop the mantle of flesh as we cross the threshold, liberty—a holy freedom, will be our garment of honour, and we shall know more what God is, shall be for ever with Him and become for ever like Him.

"For ever with the Lord!

Amen; so let it be:
Life from the dead is in that word
Tis immortality.

How much the Disciples must have missed Jesus after the Ascension! The personal influence, the inspiring goodness, the teaching Word, the exhorting love of their Lord was so constantly in request, that we can easily understand them hidden in the upper room, nerveless, masterless, and at times hopeless in life. And as the Lord, in each great crisis, directed their steps, and year by year they endured as seeing the Invisible, what must have been their anticipatory joy as they thought of the time when the calumny and reproach, the suspicion and jealousy, the hard, toilsome journeys among hostile forces, the perils by sea and land, the stripes and imprisonments should have an end, and they should rejoin their Lord, and be with Him for ever and ever in the Land of Peace!

"Here in the body pent,
Absent from Him I roam,
Yet nightly pitch my moving tent
A day's march nearer home."

And often, as St. Paul and the other Apostles wrote letters to the various churches, especially

under stress of bitter persecution, and when in this life Christians were "of all men most miserable," how the eye in antetaste would feast upon the glories of the crowns laid up for them that come out of great tribulation.

"My Father's house on high,
Home of my soul, how near;
At times, to faith's foreseeing eye,
Thy golden gates appear!
Ah! then my spirit faints
To see the land I love,
The bright inheritance of saints,
Jerusalem above."

What will it be to be there? What is heaven? Will there really be crowns and harps of gold, and crystal seas, and pearly gates? Will the sun be the Father and the Lamb?

I think there are two principal certainties warranted to faith by the Holy Scriptures.

- 1. Heaven is the *ultimate* of that which lives.
- 2. Heaven is rest from that which produces death.

Let us look at the first proposition. Not

only the Old and New Testament Scriptures, but the writings of the poets under every religious influence, agree here. Those who live in Olympus are freed from the limitations of human sense, and those who are found in Elysium enjoyed a keener and more spiritual life than those who were still upon earth. But when we refer to the Sacred Word, there is no longer the slightest shadow of a doubt that heaven is an elevation of earthly life to a more spiritual level; a lifting of man from the sordid and mortal to the spiritual and eternal.

Heaven is *therefore* exclusive. The good, and the strong, and the pure in man can be lifted up; the evil, and selfish, and weak, and double must be left behind. Admit the sinner to heaven, and you destroy heaven. Hence Lucifer was by his very nature excluded, though ever so able he might be.

Hence, again, the mere skill in serving the Church is not only no longer a necessary quantity in the candidate, but many a man, who in Christ's name has done many wonderful

works, is yet rejected. Heaven is not the home for him.

Goodness, and love, and life with all its branches and influences, culminate in heaven; nothing else can arrive there. A good tree cannot bear corrupt fruit, neither can men produce the useful from destruction, and disease, and death. Only that which is truly man can grow up to heaven; all else is rejected, and wisely so.

Many utter harsh criticisms of the Almighty God, because they say He condemns men to hell. This is not just. It is not God's will that any should perish, but that they should repent and live; and He has not spared His only begotten Son, in man's service! But if men choose to be grovellers, creepers, all their lives, they cannot at the day of judgment stand up like the forest trees in the free air of heaven. Heaven is not so much a question of place, as it is of condition and nature. A vile person could not be happy there. Indeed, the most terrible hell a man could know would be for a

sinful nature to be condemned to an eternity of heaven; to see the joys of the pure he could not drink in, the gladness of the free he could not feel, to hear the music which was discordant to him, the praise of a Being he looked upon as a tyrant, and much beside. Heaven would be hell to him indeed.

To the soul which has lived here, heaven would be what the tree is to the struggling shoot which has not yet reached the surface of the earth—the development, under happier conditions, of the same life which was lived here below.

And heaven, *therefore*, will be a rest from sin. Not the home of idleness, as some people picture it, but the home of life, where happiness and peace are not poisoned by the venom of that which offends.

"So when my latest breath
Shall rend the veil in twain,
By death I shall escape from death,
And life eternal gain."

The nature of heaven must, of necessity,

have an important bearing upon our preparation here. We must sow for immortality if we would reap heaven; we must mature life if our aim be life for evermore! And, in a sense, we can, even here, be "absent from the body, and present with the Lord."

"Home of my soul, how near

At times, to faith's foreseeing eye,
Thy golden gates appear."

"For ever with the Lord,

Father, if 'tis Thy will,

The promise of that faithful word

E'en here to me fulfil.

"Be Thou at my right hand,
Then can I never fail;
Uphold Thou me, and I shall stand,
Fight, and I must prevail."

Here we should learn only what will be of use to us, build only that which will defend us, attempt only the advancement of God's kingdom within us. Are we doing this? Are we 'mortifying the flesh, and the lusts of the flesh?' Are we leading captivity captive, overcoming bad habits, and becoming robust and helpful in the presence of the Healer?

We have many opportunities, surely, of growing up into closer communion with Christ which we, alas, neglect and ever undervalue. And yet every step *should* make us stronger for the journey, every echo from the Celestial Choir *should* nerve us more for the struggle for the everlasting gain of salvation, full and free, and eternal.

Let us not sing of what we would have done in the days when Christ was present upon earth. We can be nearer to Him in spirit now than even the Disciples were until after the first Whit-Sunday. He is by our beds of pain, in our counting-houses, walking over green fields and rolling ocean billows. He points to His wounds our sins still keep open, and says:

"This I did for thee,
What hast thou done for Me?"

"For ever with the Lord." We may be for ever with Him here and hereafter, until,

"Knowing as I am known,
How shall I love the Word,
And oft repeat before the throne,
For ever with the Lord."



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